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"Look, there he is now!"

See page 242.

BEYOND THE SUNSET

A TALE OF LOVE AND PIRATE GOLD

BY

GEORGE ROTHWELL BROWN

Author of "My Country"†

ILLUSTRATED BY

REGINALD F. BOLLES

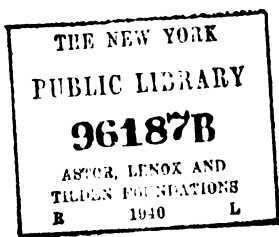


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TO
THE MEMORY OF
ALFRED HENRY LEWIS

**"Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars until I die."**

ULYSSES

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BEYOND THE SUNSET

BEYOND THE SUNSET

CHAPTER I

"MONSIEUR LURONNE"

"Truly, thou art my very son, dear child," said Colonel Chillingworth, resting the point of his blade upon the floor, and panting from his exertions. "Thou hast fair winded me, what with the vigor of thy arm and the cleverness of thy wrist. I have reared up a pupil who is better than her master."

His daughter laughed, and, fondling her rapier, nodded gaily when she saw that he was rested and ready to begin again. And so the shining blades flashed and sparkled once more, and made merry music which so entranced them that they did not hear the door when it opened, nor Algernon Sidney when he came softly into the room and stood quietly in the corner, watching them at play.



her arm, the glowing health this exercise has brought to her. Why, an' she were a boy—”

Algernon Sidney threw back his head, and laughed. “Ah! Chillingworth,” he said, “thou knowest well thou lovest this sport for its own sake, and the maid, too, so have done with all this preaching of Puritanism, save in your politics, and give some bridle to the Cavalier strain in thy blood that has made thee the soldier that thou art. As for this lass of thine not having been a boy—it is not kind to her always to speak thy heedless thought, nor honest, neither, unless I read thee wrong, for I do think the wound of that regret is long since healed.”

“That is true,” replied Colonel Chillingworth quickly, “and yet,” casting upon his daughter a look of deep affection, “I wish that for this task that now confronts her she had the roughness of a man.”

“Nonsense!” said Sidney, briskly. “I warrant you the maid hath more wit than any lad of her years. You will unnerve her for her work before she makes a fair start, with your doubts of her ability to do it well, which I am

sure she will, and in good time, too. I have no fears for her, not one."

"Aye, but she is my daughter, Sidney," answered Colonel Chillingworth in a low tone, and drawing within the circle of his arm the slender, blue-eyed stripling who stood upon the hearth rug before the fire in front of them. "My daughter! My only child; and the journey before her is a long one, bad enough in times of peace; one fraught with many dangers in times like these. I am almost of a mind to abandon the plan, and go myself, in her stead."

"'Twere madness, Chillingworth. Your neck would pay the forfeit, and Mistress Nancy would lose her only parent, and the Cause an arm and brain we cannot spare. We have threshed it all out—there is no other way."

Colonel Chillingworth threw himself into a low settle by the fire, and buried his head in his hands. There was a moment of silence, and then a girl's voice, laughing silverly.

"I am all ready, General Sidney," Nancy said, running her hand caressingly through

her father's thick gray hair. "I think the plan we have made is perfect. It cannot fail."

"She hath more spunk than thou didst show at Marston Moor, I do believe, Chillingworth," chuckled his companion. "Upon my honor, I feel quite sure that Mistress Nancy will be in no more danger upon the road than if she remained here in France, with a cloud of gallants trapesing at her petticoats."

"Much I care for them," said the girl, tossing her head, while her father's face darkened.

"That is one reason," he said slowly, "why I am glad to have her go back to England, where a woman is a woman—and not a plaything."

"Moreover," went on Sidney, "since the message she is to carry is a verbal one, and she will have no papers, I cannot see how she can be compromised. Upon my soul, in that garb she makes as brave-looking a lad as ever I hope to see—and doesn't look a day over nineteen."

"And why should I, pray," cried Nancy,

"since that is just my age? Is it not, father?"

Algernon Sidney, like the brave knight and gentleman he was, gravely made her a bow.

"It was but yesterday, dear child," he said, a smile of infinite tenderness in his dark, thoughtful eyes, "that I welcomed you into the world. We remember the night she arrived upon this sorely perplexed planet, back in, let me see—'49, eh, Chillingworth? How time doth fly! And here it is the year of our Lord 1668—and nothing accomplished yet."

He turned to the window, and in silence stood looking unseeingly at the plump gray cat, and the geranium in a pot on the sill, and over and beyond them at the drab sky and the chimney-pots of Lille. The afterglow of an autumn sunset lighted up his face, a soldierly face, the face of a man who had seen much and done much; the face of a dreamer, too, with those dark eyes looking out calmly upon a troubled world, from beneath arched eyebrows as delicate as a woman's, and a broad, commanding forehead; a patrician face, with something of feminine grace and refinement softening the rugged lines of the man of ac-

tion. He wore a mustache and a brown wig, and was dressed, as was Colonel Chillingworth, in brown breeches, without adornment, his coat of the same somber hue set off only by a white cravat.

"Aye, I remember the night well enough," broke in Colonel Chillingworth, taking him by the arm, and leading him from the window. "And also how we sat before the fire waiting for a word from the leech above-stairs—and hoping that it would be a boy."

"Speak for yourself, Colonel," laughed Algernon Sidney, returning to his former mood of gaiety. "I distinctly recall the happy occasion, and remember wishing that it might be a girl, and wagering you a crown that it would be, and, upon my soul, I am glad I won, for truth to tell, Colonel, and in all seriousness, I should rather stake my fortunes and those of my beloved country this night upon this slender little maid, who hath the cunning of all her sex, than upon any beardless boy, bragging and blustering about, in Christendom."

"Thank you, General Sidney," smiled Mistress Nancy, dropping him a courtesy with a

graceful movement that brought into relief her dainty limbs, encased in crimson stockings and fawn-colored loose breeches.

She also wore a short coat, in the new fashion, slashed in the sleeves to show her white linen, and ribbons everywhere, at the knees, in loops at her waist, and tying the periwig at the ends.

On the back of the settle was a brown riding cloak, and on the table in the middle of the room a broad-brimmed Cavalier's hat, with a sweeping red plume. The latter she adjusted with careless grace.

A rather tall, lank, long-limbed creature, Mistress Nancy had scarcely yet reached the threshold of womanhood. Hers were the delicate and elusive charms of girlish beauty. Smiles lurked in the corners of her wide blue eyes, as if they were half afraid to brave the displeasure of her firm, strong mouth, a mouth so like that of her father, that Sidney, struck by the resemblance, and remembering that eventful day on Marston Moor, when Chillingworth had fought his way to where he lay wounded, and had saved his life, felt steal into

his soul an abiding confidence and faith in her, and in the success of the mission upon which they were about to send her.

Absent from England at the Restoration, Algernon Sidney had gone in 1659 to Holland to negotiate a treaty between Sweden and Denmark, nor had he been back home since then. In the Low Countries he had vainly sought aid for the movement to establish a republican government in England, a movement into which he had thrown himself with a fervor that was more intellectual than religious, and, failing, he had come to France, where he was one of the leaders in a continuous conspiracy for the overthrow of the Stuarts and the monarchy, from which he had gained nothing but his own banishment.

In Paris he had been joined by Colonel Chillingworth, who had served with him in Ireland, had gone over to Cromwell, and had been compelled to fly for his life when Charles, coming back to London as the King, had begun to inflict upon his former enemies those open and covert punishments which were making him detested throughout the free-thinking world,

and driving the followers of the Protector to despair and poverty.

Colonel Chillingworth's own estates in Devon had been declared forfeited, and had been bestowed upon Don Luis de Espinosa, a Spanish nobleman, who had been one of the royal refugee's suite in Flanders. The colonel's wife had early left him a widower, with an only child, and he had joined in Paris the colony of the revolutionists who waited there for the storm at home to blow over, or else plotted for the overthrow of the crown. At the French capital he had resumed his friendship with Sidney, which had been interrupted when Algernon had decided not to throw in his lot with Oliver Cromwell, and once again they became inseparable companions, as they waited and watched the course of events in England.

Early in the year, King Charles had announced to Parliament his negotiation of a triple alliance between England, Holland and Sweden, which caused great rejoicing in England. Secret agents at Versailles, however, had just given to Colonel Chillingworth and

General Sidney positive information that Charles was even then negotiating a clandestine treaty with Louis, which would make England the cat's-paw of France, and that the dissolute monarch was leading his life of debauchery in London on money secretly supplied to him by the French king.

It was to carry tidings of this treachery to Colonel Chillingworth's kinsman, Captain Hazzard Mountford, then living quietly in London, that Nancy had been chosen, for that they were so surrounded by spies they durst not trust to any messenger, save one in whom they could repose the completest faith, so grave a secret, and one so full of peril to so many of their friends.

The three had left Paris quietly a week before, and had come to Lille, which was as far as the two men had thought it prudent for them to accompany the girl. The final stages of the journey to Calais, and from thence across the Channel to England, she must make alone.

Mistress Nancy had entered into the scheme with enthusiasm. She had long sensed, rather

than really known, that her stern soldier-father had always cherished in his heart a deep regret that his only child had not been a boy, and now that an opportunity offered, she was willing and eager to prove that a woman could serve her country and her cause as boldly and sagaciously as a man.

A Devon girl, reared in the very hotbed of Puritanism, at a time when all England was torn by civil wars, could not very well escape those influences which make for ruggedness of character, and Nancy Chillingworth was a Devonshire girl to the tips of her fingers. She had spent much of her childhood in Plymouth, while her father was at the wars in Scotland, with her maiden aunt, Mistress Faith Cruller, who proved so inadequate to the task of rearing a high-spirited girl that Nancy grew up as little spoiled by the gloom of Puritanism as any girl in England. She spent her time in the shipyards, in a nest of chips and shavings, watching the men lay down the keel of some vessel, or fashioning with plank and spar a great ship, that she was later to see float

down the Catwater, and so sail away to the distant seas.

On the docks, when barks dropped anchor, battered by storm, or showing the scars of the fights they had been in, she would listen with shining eyes to the stories the mariners told of their adventures. She loved to go into the deep-bellied merchantmen, or the men-of-war, lying in the harbor, until she came to be as much at home on shipboard as in her aunt's front yard.

Sometimes she would spend hours sprawled upon the deck, absorbed in "Master Tapp's Sea-man's Kalender," for books, in her home, were scarce; and her eager mind drank up all the knowledge of the sea thus spread before her—how ships are built and rigged and victualed and sailed, so that she might have got a berth on any vessel out of Devon had she not been a girl.

Boys were her companions, and she entered into all their sports and games, and by the time she was fifteen could sail a boat with any of them. As these sturdy lads grew up and

went off, one by one, in some splendid ship, with their bundles on their backs, they would leave her weeping on the quay, straining her eyes after their dimming sails, and raging at the fate that kept her from going, too. And so, when her father had come for her one night, hard pressed, with Royalist soldiers close at his heels, and searching the town for him high and low, Nancy had gloried in the suit of boy's clothes in which she had been smuggled aboard a lugger, and carried off safely to France.

So now, when the riding-cloak had been adjusted to her satisfaction, and her hat tilted at just the proper angle, she stamped her heel upon the hearth with all the sense of joyous freedom that being a boy again meant to her.

"I am ready," she announced, and held out her hand to General Sidney, who kissed it gallantly, as if he had been a Royalist, and then, laughing, gave it a mighty squeeze that made her wince.

"How now, Monsieur!" he laughed, with a twinkle in his eye. "Thou must have a man's hand-clasp."

She answered him with a roguish wink, and

then, shadows chasing the smile from her eyes, threw herself into her father's arms.

"And now, my child," said he, "the hour of parting has come. Thou must go to Cousin Mountford, and say to him—"

"Upon my soul, Chillingworth," interrupted Sidney, "more instructions! By my word, thou art an old grandmother. I warrant the maid will carry the message without dropping an 'h,' and that she will be safely at Mountford's house before you can say 'Jack Robinson.' "

"Of course I shall," replied Nancy.

"The Calais coach leaves within the half-hour—so be off with you, sir, and accept our apologies for not accompanying you thither, which might frustrate all our plans at last. Now, out the back entry with you, Monsieur Luronne, and we will watch the coach from the window, and do you hang out the signal—your hat—that we may safely count upon your departure having been made."

Nancy smiled at the nickname which had been bestowed upon her. She clasped General Sidney's hand, threw herself into her father's

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arms, kissed him—and the door had swung to softly behind her, and the two men were standing there alone in the little room, looking at each other searchingly in the gathering dusk, and straining their ears for the sound of her footsteps on the stairs.

CHAPTER II

YELLOW EYES

It was with a brave show of more courage than she really felt that Monsieur Luronne left her father and General Sidney and set forth upon her mission. Now, as she stood in the narrow street in the gathering gloom, she was half-minded to fly back up the stairs; but the importance of the task that lay before her, and the thought that the Calais coach must be even then standing at the Golden Rabbit, with its six horses slobbering at their bits, and the postilions taking their farewell drinks at the tap-room, and that it would soon be off into the night, leaving her behind if she did not bestir herself, spurred her into action.

With a quick glance up and down the dim street, streaked here and there with little paths of light that streamed through shop windows and half-opened doors, she drew her cloak about her, and fell in behind a couple of sol-

diers who passed that way, laughing and jesting.

The Golden Rabbit was at the end of the street, only a short distance from the rooms over a pastry-cook's shop, which her father had taken when they arrived at Lille; and Nancy quickly found herself in the brick-paved courtyard, mingling with the throng of soldiers, stable-boys, travelers setting out upon a journey, or else returning from one, and a horde of vagabonds and beggars, and street-hawkers screaming their wares, and arguing vociferously with prospective customers. Under an archway at the corner the marketmen from the countryside were already gathering their carts, from which peeped baskets of greens, and sides of bacon, and plump fowls, and appetizing rolls of butter, wrapped in the green leaves of the vine, and sleepy-eyed children, all in a happy jumble.

Rough, shaggy ponies and uncombed little donkeys, unharnessed for the night, lay between their shafts, or contentedly nibbled their turnip-tops, spread for them upon the flagstones. Pigs squealed, hens cackled, ducks

and geese squawked, and bereaved cows called plaintively for their calves, for which a lively bargaining was already in progress.

Torches gleamed in the murky evening air, and cast dancing shadows upon the crowds of farmers and drovers, making ready for the market-day upon the morrow. So Mistress Nancy, seeing what sort of company she was in, and realizing that so far nobody had recognized her, or given her so much as a second look, felt her spirits rise, and shaking off a momentary fear of recognition, was thus all the more protected against it. When she sought the fat, paunchy landlord of the inn to inquire about the seat in the coach that had been bespoken for her, she swaggered like some duchess's page, or the valet of a fine gentleman out for a lark.

But reaching the landlord, she quickly found, was to be no easy matter. In tight-fitting green breeches, and a brown smock that reached to his knees, both plentifully sprinkled with grease by reason of his frequent trips to the kitchen to turn a goose or a saddle of mutton upon the spit, this personage, who reflected

his importance in every crease of his shiny face, that looked as if it had been freshly larded, held in his hand a small bit of board upon which he kept a record of the passages engaged, written in a sprawling hand with a chunk of red chalk, so that betwixt the clumsiness of his fingers and the awkwardness of his materials, he was frequently at as great a loss to read what he had written as he had been at first to write it; the more so since he was being well-nigh jostled off his feet by a crowd of drovers, teamsters, wool-buyers, soldiers, torn and ragged, and limping from their wounds, and tipsy seamen, on their way back to the fleet from a spree, and most of them, in consequence of the good times they had had, without the price of the fare, and all the more clamorous, and noisy, and profane, for that reason.

Nancy waited impatiently at first for a chance to claim her seat in the coach for the north, and then, observing that she could not hope to accomplish her purpose by such modest tactics, she placed herself behind a rotund little French monk, who was worming his way toward the landlord, butting those about him

with his head, clawing and scratching at others who stood in his way, or shoving them aside with a pair of enormous shoulders which made him seem almost as broad as he was long. Soon Nancy had the satisfaction of perceiving that she was slowly but surely approaching the center of the landlord's magic circle.

She was just congratulating herself on her shrewdness when a gigantic Norman pikeman hurled her aside, that he might take her place in the wake of the energetic little friar, so that she reeled backward and would have gone sprawling if a strong hand had not grasped her by the cravat and whirled her, spinning, back upon her feet.

"*Merci, monsieur,*" she gasped, and looked into a pair of merry blue eyes that twinkled in the face of a red-haired lad whose countenance proclaimed his nationality as unmistakably as if a map of Donegal had been printed upon it.

It was so full of freckles that it would have been difficult to say whether there were a million of them, or just one large one. His nose turned up at an angle; but it was his mouth that

made Nancy feel that she had known him all her life; such a laughing, whimsical mouth it was, with red lips parted to show two rows of glistening teeth, and a carmine rag of a tongue that curled out of the corners on the slightest provocation.

"Faith, monsieur!" he said with the rich brogue of a North-of-Irelander, "you could better dance a minuet than the step you need to fight your way in there. Are you by the Brussels coach?"

"For Calais," answered Mistress Nancy in English, and pulling her hat down further over her eyes. "My seat has been engaged these two days gone, but I wish to see that no mistake has been made, and claim my place."

"English you are? Faith, and I took you for a Pollyvoøer, I did. Heed a word of wisdom, sir, and claim your seat yourself, while the pickin's good. It's filling up inside, and you'll have to be quick to get a place. And get inside—it'll be airish toward the coast to-night, I'm thinking."

"Are you by the Calais coach?" she asked him, hesitating.

"If I can work my way, I am. They usually need a hand with the horses at the last minute, and it's my meat this night if I have to commit a murder to get it."

"Should I get in at once, then?" demanded the girl, moving toward the coach, and then stopping, in doubt.

"Sure, and I would," and with this he pulled open the door of the coach and gave her a "leg up," hurling her bodily within, just in time to rob a portly sheep-dealer, who otherwise would have secured the last of the coveted places, but who proved no match for Nancy's enforced agility.

Wedge in between the little monk, whose energy had rewarded him, and who snored already, like a trooper, on the one side, and a wheezy tradesman on the other, who coughed, and choked, and spluttered and blew until he shook the whole coach, Nancy settled herself as comfortably as possible, and tried to turn a deaf ear to the sheep-dealer, who complained bitterly of the effect the night air on the top of the coach would have upon his rheumatism. She was almost ready, to be rid of him, to sur-

render him her seat, when he discovered that it was the Brussels coach that he wanted, and went plunging away into the crowd, cursing and groaning.

It was long past the hour of departure already, but not until both of Nancy's feet had gone to sleep, and she felt as if a million needles were pricking holes in them, and her spine seemed to have been driven clear through the hard wooden seat, from which most of the stuffing and leather had been rubbed and scraped by a generation of restless travelers, did the coach finally get away, heaving and lurching over the cobble-stones.

As it rumbled through the dim street, past the pastry-cook's, under whose dark eaves she knew two anxious men watched for her signal, she contrived, by leaning over the fat pauncer of the snoring monk, to hang her hat from the window, waving it as long as she thought they were in sight. But whether her father and General Sidney were able to see it in the darkness of the poorly lighted street she had no way of discovering, and was compelled to trust to their eagerness to sharpen their eyes.

Soon they were through the city gates, the fortifications were left behind, and the horses strained in their harnesses over the muddy ruts of the road which stretched away ahead of them through the gloom.

The excitement and the novelty of her strange position kept her awake for a time, but even these wore off, and before long she fell into a sleep which not even the snores and wheezes of her two neighbors could disturb.

She did not awaken until near midnight. The coach had stopped at a roadside inn, a wretched place on the edge of a thick woods. Peering out, and observing that the postilions were changing horses, Nancy, bent upon stretching her cramped legs, climbed softly over the monk, who was still gurgling and snoring, his head upon his breast, as if each discordant gasp would be his last.

She found herself in a small, bare stable-yard, lighted only by the smoking torches of the hostlers, who were kicking and bullying the fresh horses into their places.

The tired moon had wrapped herself for the night in a coverlet of clouds and only a lone

star shone low down on the horizon. The whole world seemed soggy and clammy, like a moist pudding laid away in a damp cloth.

Seeing that the stable-boys, what with the darkness and the restlessness of the horses, and the cold, which made all their fingers thumbs, were likely to be some time about their task, Nancy turned to the inn and, observing the gleam of a candle through the window, went in and stood before the fire which smoked and smoldered on the hearth and threatened at any minute to give up the unequal and discouraging fight against wet wood. Looking about, she found herself in a low room, and, when her eyes had grown used to the shadows which engulfed it, she made out in the center of the floor a heavy hewn table, on which were the remains of a repast, which a frowsy scullion-boy was clearing away, and which she thought likely had been served to three rough, unkempt men, mud-covered from beard to brogans, who had drawn their bench into a recess at a casement window opening upon the stable-yard, where they sat, heads together, talking in whispers.

There was no particular reason why Nancy should have supposed that they were talking about her, save that they did, truly enough, steal a glance at her from time to time. But the conviction that they were discussing her, and very earnestly, too, came upon her with a little sense of apprehension, of what she knew not. Only she was glad when the door opened and the red-headed Irish lad, whom she had seen in the market-square at Lille, came into the room, and beckoned to her with a motion as if to say that the coach was ready to resume its journey. She had a better opportunity to observe him then, as he stood beneath one of the lights thrust into a hole in the wall by the door, a clean-cut, good-looking lad, despite his ragged clothes and freckles, and the general air of indifference to fate and fortune which sat upon him; nor did she fail to note, even in that brief second, as she started for the door, that he, too, had suddenly become an object of the scrutiny of the three men in the corner by the casement.

She knew that the country they were in was overrun with soldiers of fortune, temporarily

out of employment because of the cessation of the wars the king had waged in the Low Countries and turned adrift to shift for themselves, like hungry wolves let loose in a sheepfold.

One of the men, a great high-shouldered fellow, in the dress of a soldier of Flanders, though he looked more the Spaniard, quit his companions, and, leaving the room by a small door at the back, which opened long enough to show the corner of a smoke-grimed kitchen beyond, with a pot steaming on the grate, came back again on the instant, with the landlord at his heels. The landlord nodded at something the fellow said to him—all this in a twinkling—and when Nancy turned to join the Irish lad, one of the others crossed the room at a bound and shut her off from the door. And then, as there came to her from the frosty court-yard the crack of the postilion's whip and the crunch of wheels, and she realized that the coach had gone, she saw him leap toward her, with a billet of wood in his hand, saw the freckle-faced boy spring at his neck from behind and go down with a blow on his head, saw the landlord bar the door and pull

the candles from the wall, saw the other two men, as the light faded out, hurl themselves upon her, and then—nothing.

How long a time had passed before she put forth her hand in the darkness she did not know. But she did know, vaguely, that the effort cost her pain, and she seemed to float off again on a sea of unconsciousness. Again, after a long, long while, she stretched forth her hand and this time she clutched something—a handful of straw. The discovery surprised her. She pondered upon it, minutes—hours—weeks—time meant nothing. She tried again. More straw. She was on her back, lying upon a bed of straw and rushes. It was certainly not the coach. In a cart, then, for it was moving, and roughly, too. If it were not for the pain in her head, she thought, she could tell whether it was a cart or not. Yes, it was certainly a cart. There was no room in the coach for one to lie upon the floor.

Then where was the coach? Where was the landlord of the inn—and where were the three men in the corner by the casement—and the red-haired Irish boy? A groan at her side

answered this question. He was there beside her, in the straw. Moreover, his wrist was tied to hers with a knotted rope. This discovery prompted her to still another: their feet were lashed together. No matter! It was only the pain in the head that counted, after all.

As for the Irish lad, he no doubt was dead. Had she not seen him struck down? No, he had groaned. Well, he had groaned, and then died. Yes, she had seen him struck down by a blow on his head. And then they had come upon her, in a rush across the room, and had taken her off her guard. Her mission was a failure at the start. She had been spied upon, followed, half killed, and carted away like a sack of meal. And back in Lille two men waited anxiously for her to deliver the tidings they were sending to England. Too bad! Too bad, indeed, for they had put such faith in her!

She opened her mouth, and the scream that poured forth in an angry, inarticulate wail of rage brought the front flap of the cart open with a jerk, and she saw framed in the opening,

against a cold gray sky-line, the thick-lipped face of a man, with toothless gums, and a pair of yellow eyes, eyes the color of burnished gold, that looked as though they would scorch and burn and wither; eyes that blazed up and then grew dull, that flashed again, and sparkled like fire; eyes that seared her, that bored into the very soul of her, that she knew she would never forget again as long as she might live, and that she never did forget. Not a word did he speak. Not a sound came from between those thick, purpled lips. But his eyes were eloquent. She looked into them, and obeyed their silent command.

The flap of thick cloth that covered the cart dropped back into place. She was in darkness, with only the image of that pasty head, hairless, with not a bristle upon it from nape to chin, bald as a turnip, and colorless but for the purple, swollen lips, and a great patch of red that showed when the lips were opened, to haunt her memory. And so she dropped off into nothingness again.

When next Nancy raised herself to look about her it was broad day. The man with

the yellow eyes was leaning into the cart, hacking with a knife at the ropes that bound her to her comrade. He turned those two twin coals upon her, and, answering their mute question, as to whether she could walk, she nodded her head, crawled weakly to her feet, and with his assistance gained the ground.

She was weak, and grasped the wheel of the cart to steady herself. She saw by the sun that it must be on toward evening. At her side a tangled thicket, stunted trees, bent by the wind, as dark, wild, and forbidding a place as any spot she had ever seen; in front of her a rocky beach, along which the calm sea lapped and gurgled. Close in, a small boat, with two men at the oars, and, in the distance, half a mile off-shore, a brigantine, on which the sails were breaking out; and she could see the seamen in her shrouds, and hear the ropes slipping in the falls.

The man with the yellow eyes emerged from the cart with the Irish lad, his head dangling between his shoulders, the face covered with clotted blood. He put the boy down, picked her up, and strode down to the beach, where

he waded out to his hips in the water and threw her in the bottom of the boat.

"Lie still and hold your tongue," growled one of the men at the oars.

Yellow Eyes scrambled back over the rocks, and came down again with the Irish lad over his shoulders. He dropped the boy into the boat beside Nancy and, looking meaningly at the seaman at the bow oars, held out his hand. The sailor shook his head and pointed toward the ship.

Yellow Eyes nodded at this, and, shoving off into deep water, waded out to his middle and swung himself into the stern sheets. The sailors fell to their oars.

Presently, Nancy, on her back in the bottom of the boat, saw the shadow of the ship fall across them. She was jerked to her feet and thrust up the ladder in the waist, followed by the two sailors, with the Irish lad between them, and Yellow Eyes, who vanished into the big cabin. The boat was swung up at the bits, the yards were squared away, and, the sails filling, the brigantine dropped down the bay on the ebbing tide, her nose turned to the open sea.

The ship had scarce got a bone in her teeth in the freshening breeze when there was a commotion behind her, and Nancy, who had sunk down in the scuppers, turned to see the man with the yellow eyes throw off two seamen who were clinging to him, and rush to the rail with a look on his face so full of astonishment that it would have been ludicrous but for the rage and hate in the eyes that burned like blazing fagots, the purple lips, now almost black and twisted with passion, and the empty red gullet which the girl observed now plainly for the first time, with a shudder, for the tongue had been cut out.

She turned her head to shut out the wretched sight, and her glances swept the roughening waters of the little cove as it broadened into the channel and over which the whitecaps danced with crests that rose and fell, and broke into glistening sprays of foam. She saw the dimming shore-line, the rocks and scrub oaks, and against their background the cart, with the shaggy horse standing there patiently, waiting for its master to come back.

CHAPTER III

THE SHIP OF BRIDES

A moan at her side made Nancy turn, and then she sank on one knee to the deck beside the Irish lad, who, lying still where he had been thrown, now opened his eyes. A wave of tenderness swept over her.

"Forgive me," she said, and gently smoothed back the matted hair, disclosing a long, jagged cut, that laid open the scalp to the skull. No one paid the slightest attention to them as she looked about her for a friendly face.

The ship was in the utmost confusion. The waist, as far as the forecastle, was a litter of bales, and chests of goods, and a great number of casks in a heap, which a dozen tatterdemalions, haggard of face, and wretched-looking beyond belief, were passing below and stowing away in the hold under the direction of the cape-merchant, or purser. Aboard the mainmast, at the capstan, stood Yellow Eyes, head

sunk between his shoulders, in an attitude of utter dejection. The deck swarmed with men, and women, too; some in rags, others in finery that looked oddly out of place amid such surroundings. They lounged along the gunwales, gazing off toward the shore, now a dim line of haze astern, or else sprawled full length, or sat where they could find a place, on chest or crate, as if worn out and exhausted.

One among them she recognized with a start, the little monk who had been her traveling companion in the Calais coach. He was seated on a box, contentedly gnawing the nub of a ham bone, and sucking out the marrow with every evidence of satisfaction. At the rail near her a young French girl was leaning dejectedly. Nancy beckoned to her.

"Can you not find a basin of water and a cloth for me?" she asked, with a gesture toward the wounded boy on the deck.

The girl shrugged her shoulders as if in refusal and then, thinking the better of it, went off without a word. She emerged presently from the cook-room in the fore-castle with a bowl of steaming water and a bit of a rag.

Mistress Chillingworth took them eagerly, smiling her thanks, and began bathing the head of the Irish boy. The girl, watching these proceedings in silence, went off again, and, coming back with a tankard of water, raised the boy's head in the hollow of her arm and poured a few drops down his throat.

"He will come around all right," she said, looking at Nancy curiously. "Your brother?"

Nancy shook her head.

"A friend," she answered.

"'Tis an ugly wound."

"For my sake, too! A brave lad. Come, rouse up, sir." This to the Irish boy. "Let us get you once upon your feet, and I feel sure you will be better speedily."

Thus encouraged, the boy climbed to the rail and stood there, swaying about. The two girls held him up, and, the salt of the sea getting into his head braced him wonderfully. Now they observed crew and passengers gulping down soup, which was being passed out to them in bowls, and eating great chunks of bread.

Nancy, joining the rush to the cook-room, returned with food which all three fell upon

greedily, their backs to the bulwarks, the bowls of soup in their laps, the bread serving them for spoons. The meal put strength and courage into them.

Even the French girl showed in her eyes that she had plucked up heart. Of an unmistakable type, she was pretty, chic, bedecked in cheap finery, with a pale face, deep circles beneath her eyes, cheeks rouged, a girl who had crowded thirty years into her twenty years of life, and showed every one of them. Nancy, with that quick and true intuition which young girls sometimes feel, knew her for what she was, for she had lived too long in Paris not to have seen many like her.

"What may your name be, my friend?" she asked.

The French girl shrugged her shoulders and smiled a wan, ghostly smile. Tears stood in her eyes.

"My name? What matters that. They call me 'Cherie.' Let that do for you. And yours, monsieur?"

Nancy blushed.

"My name? Oh, Monsieur Luronne."

The French girl looked at her keenly, as if she would speak. Then she shrugged her shoulders.

"And yours, monsieur?" This to the Irish lad. "Since fate has thrown us together we may as well be friends."

"Barney McGiggen, mademoiselle, at your service. At least, I will be at your service when I can rid myself of this pain in my head. Faith! What a blow that fellow gave me! I am stunned by it yet."

"What blow?" demanded Cherie, who looked inquiringly at Nancy. "I saw no one strike you. How came you by this frightful wound? And you, Monsieur—Luronne. There is blood upon your face, and in your hair. I fear you need assistance, too."

"'Tis nothing. I am all right now. We were beaten and brought on board, as you have seen. What ship I know not."

"The *Saint Jean Baptiste*," she said. "We sailed from Calais under charter of the French West India Company for Tortuga, with a mixed cargo, and fifty women to be the wives of the colonists there."

"Tortuga!" cried Nancy. "The name is new to me. I know not where that city is."

"I do not know rightly myself, monsieur, only that it is in the Western Indies, and it is not a city at all but an island, as near as I can make it out."

"The Spanish Indies! Then are we not bound for England?"

"Ah, no, monsieur. Were you for England?"

"Faith! And it'll be a long day before we see England again, I'm thinking," said Barney, a broad grin stretching his lips almost from ear to ear. "I saw by the looks of her she's a ship for foreign parts, and sure, it suits me well enough. I'd as soon go to the New World as anywhere else, and a bit sooner. There's gold there, to be picked up in the streams. Faith, monsieur, we'll all be rich."

Nancy had sprung to her feet, and tears which she could not keep back flooded her eyes, and rolled down her cheeks. But tears had been too common a sight upon that ship that day to cause any comment. Cherie buried her face in her arm upon the rail and wept, and

Barney's blue eyes began to blink rapidly. He choked back any pangs of homesickness he might have felt with a merry whistle, and slapped Nancy upon the shoulder.

"Have done with tears, monsieur," he laughed. "Save them for another time. Sure, and I guess we'll need them soon enough at best."

Nancy dried her eyes. She did not care for herself, for the love of adventure ran warm and red in her veins. But the picture her imagination drew of the two men in a shabby lodging in Lille, waiting for her to come back from a mission from which she would not return, and of the long days of anxiety and grief her father would feel until she could contrive to get to him some word of her plight, was more than she could bear with unconcern.

"'Tis a long journey these women are taking to marry their men in the New World," she said after a while. "But women have ever dared all dangers for the sake of the men they love."

Cherie smiled, but a smile in which there was no mirth.

"Love and romance, I fear, have no place in the hearts of such as we. We are going out to marry men whom we have never seen. For myself, I shall take the first who offers. Yes, the first man who speaks me when I land, him will I have for husband."

"I do not understand." Nancy's eyes were wide now. "I thought women, and men, too, married but for love. I would wed for love, and love alone."

"The world has been good to you, monsieur, but with us—it is not so. It is a world of misery and sorrow, of wretchedness and unhappiness." She pointed to a group of bedraggled women leaning listlessly over the rail at the stern, as if straining their tired eyes to catch one last glimpse of the land they were leaving. "Human beings, though, like the rest of us," she added significantly. "God have mercy on their souls—and on mine. Derelicts all, monsieur."

"Who are they?" asked Barney.

"Who knows?" answered Cherie, with another shrug of her shapely shoulders. "Pick-

pockets, thieves, murderers—worse. The scum of the alleys of Paris. Fine ladies of quality! I warrant you there are no greater rogues in all Europe, nor any in Christendom more steeped in misery and despair.”

“And so they are going out to—what is the name of the place?”

“Tortuga, in the Spanish Indies. I know nothing of it save what I have learned from one of the mariners who is lately from that place. A small island off the coast of Hispaniola, or Domingo, as some call it now. A rendezvous, it is, for all the riff-raff of those seas, but a pleasant enough island, and very fertile, so that the French West India Company has a mind to hold it permanently for France.

“But there are no women there, this seaman tells me, and Monsieur the Governor, thinking to make his fierce sea-rovers settle down contentedly as colonists, hit upon the idea of fetching out a shipload of women to be their wives. Well, I am one of the sheep bought in the market-place and now being delivered.”

“Do none go willingly?”

"*Ah! oui*, some among us do—those who would save their necks, or their carcasses from rotting in the hulks."

"And the men among you?"

"The same—save that they are men. They will be sold when we reach Tortuga. Well, I hope to get an honest master—and you, too. If I don't—I would kill the man who put the lash to my back!"

"Sold!" cried Nancy.

"*Oui*, the women for wives, the men for servants. You will be knocked down to the highest bidder, for six, eight, mayhap twelve, years. That is why you were kidnaped. But didn't they turn the tables on that evil-visaged scoundrel who brought you aboard! The whole ship is laughing at the way they served him."

"Yellow Eyes, you mean."

"True, his eyes are yellow, the evillest ever I saw, too. It makes my flesh creep to see him. And what a rage he is in. He came aboard to get his pay for kidnaping you two boys, and the quota of indentured servants we are taking out not being full, Captain Jean calmly car-

ries him off, too. Many's the poor devil he has sent to die in the plantations. Now he knows what it is to be paid in the same coin."

The ship was now well out of sight of land, and night coming on. They made their way into the forecabin to choose their bunks, and a poor choice it was, seeing that nearly all the places had been taken by those more prudent than themselves. A stuffy, stinking hole it was, lighted by a smoking lamp or two, overrun with vermin, crowded and packed with a noisy, blasphemous throng of men, herded together like cattle. Into this fetid cavern Nancy and Barney crept. The girl found an empty bunk too small and undesirable for anybody else to have claimed it, and curling up in it, lay down, and soon was fast asleep, with the cursing and laughing crowd of derelicts gambling and drinking all about her, and the lapping of the sea against the side of the ship in her ears.

How long a time she had slept she did not know. A low whining sound, as if of a child in pain, aroused her, and raising herself on her elbow and looking about she made out on the cabin floor the figure of a man lying upon his

back, with a half-grown mastiff puppy licking his face.

The forecastle was shrouded in darkness. A few faint flickers yet remained in one of the tallow lamps. The merry-makers who had been gathered about the rough table, playing at ombre, or lanterloo, and drinking and feasting, had vanished. The whole place was choked with the sound as of many men hard asleep. Their snores and moans and throat-rattlings floated out from every bunk, and blended in a chorus in which each man seemed to be trying to outdo his neighbor. The one upon the floor was not disturbed.

Nancy leaned from her bunk, the better to observe him and the dog that pawed at his breast, whining and uttering yelps of distress. As she did so she saw in a little patch of light from the hatchway the shadowy figure of a man. She drew back and lay still. It was Yellow Eyes.

He crept to the man upon the floor and turned him partly over, and Nancy saw then what she had not observed before, the shaft of a knife in the fellow's neck under the ear.

Yellow Eyes drew it out and wiped the blade upon the dead man's shirt. Then, kicking the puppy out of his way, he lifted the corpse upon his back, and, with a quick look around him, staggered up the companionway with his burden.

Nancy strained her ears then for the sound she knew would follow, but she could not be sure that she heard the splash as the body went overboard, as she knew it did go, as well as if she had seen it, out there on deck, with the fog settled down all around the ship, enshrouding it in a ghostly mist. She lay still, scarcely daring to breathe, for she knew, too, what Yellow Eyes would do next. And presently he came back with something in his hand that looked like a coat, and kicking again at the dog that was smelling at a spot upon the floor, dropped to his knees and began swabbing at the great red stain that Nancy knew was there. Then he disappeared up the hatchway again, leaving the puppy whimpering in the middle of the forecastle floor.

He was back again, more quickly this time, on his toes, starting at every creak and groan

of the straining timbers, listening intently, turning his head first this way and then that. Once Nancy saw his yellow eyes, glowing in the darkness like coals, full upon her. She closed her own. She scarcely breathed. Her heart stopped beating in her breast, and a roaring filled her ears.

But he passed her and went forward softly, and by and by she heard his heavy body settle down in a bunk some distance from where she lay.

The orchestra of slumbering men continued its discordant music, and presently she heard a new note join in the refrain, and knew that Yellow Eyes had gone happily to sleep, with the dead man's wallet in his shirt, and peace in his soul. In all that company she and the puppy alone were ill at ease. The dog's whines filled her with pity.

Impulsively she slipped down past the sleeping men in the bunks beneath her, gathered the puppy in her arms, and, climbing back with him, the two lay down together, and so, at last, dropped off to sleep, and slept till morning.

CHAPTER IV

THREE-LEGS

Fair winds and smooth seas marked each succeeding day for three weeks. Captain Jean, the grizzled Breton master of the *Saint Jean Baptiste*, steered their course for the Canaries, and, after stopping there for two days for wood and water, during which time no shore liberty was allowed, and a strict watch was kept night and day on all the wretched passengers, dropped down to the Cape Verdes. Here they altered their course to the westward, and went across on the northeast trades.

By this time Nancy and Barney had made themselves favorites with the passengers and crew. The only youngsters on board, they were soon fetching and carrying for the whole ship. They feasted on tidbits from the master's cabin and stood their watches with the men as if they had used the sea all their lives.

Naturally of a cheerful disposition, the girl

accepted the new state of her fortunes with Puritanical stoicism. She had satisfied herself that she had been kidnaped, not because her father's secret had been discovered, but because she was worth, delivered on board ship, a Spanish pistole to Yellow Eyes.

Him she avoided, keeping out of his way at all times, as well for her own sake as for the dog's, for Yellow Eyes had taken a violent dislike to the puppy, as if it reminded him of a thing he would forget. She often felt his molten eyes burning into her, compelling her to look at him by some strange power that they held.

She would turn her face as quickly as she could, to shut out the sight of him, with his almost fleshless skull, his thick purple lips, in which all the blood in his body seemed to have settled, and his toothless gums and tongueless gullet beyond.

She and Barney spent most of their time with the helmsman, Pierre, the wrinkled-faced, who had been twice around Africa by the Portuguese route to India, and was commonly reputed to have obtained his uncanny skill in

reckoning the position of the ship by sun or stars from the devil himself, with whom he was generally believed to be on terms of closest intimacy. A bushy beard encircled his face, so that he seemed to be peering out upon a world of dangers from behind a friendly ambuscade, a surmise confirmed by a pair of singularly alert and sharp little eyes which snapped and twinkled incessantly.

In the steerage room of the ship before the great cabin, he stood at the compass and kept a record upon the traverses of the number of half-hour-glasses they steered upon every point. From him they learned the lore of the deep sea, of storm and calm, and Nancy, as she had done in her childhood on the docks at Plymouth, drank in the tales he told with shining eyes and parted lips.

All that she had studied in Master Tapps' and the books on navigation she had read in her young girlhood came back to her now, and, Pierre explaining to her the intricate points, so that she could put what she had learned into practise, she soon became a fair navigator and could observe the latitude and longitude, and

"prick the card" and "say the compass" with the best.

And so, what with winds that failed, or blew from the wrong quarter, the weeks slipped by until on the sixty-second day after they had quit the shores of France, when water-casks were nearly empty, and crew and passengers were on short allowance of half a pound of biscuits and a gill of brandy a day, they sighted land. This proved to be the easternmost cape of Hispaniola. So, standing off to avoid a Spanish ship of war that gave chase, they bore away to the northwest.

"Hark ye, Barney," said Nancy, drawing the Irish lad into a quiet corner. "I've been working out a scheme and want your advice upon it. Ever since we left France I have been busy with plans to get back, but ever a difficulty offered to my designs. Now, I have in my shoes some gold pieces, and with them, I warrant you, we shall be able to pay our passage back like gentlemen. What think you of that for an idea?"

Barney's million freckles blended into one before his whole face seemed to disappear

over the horizon of his distended mouth, which opened in a grin so vast he was like to lose himself in it entirely. His blue eyes blinked furiously. Then there came into them a subtle craftiness.

“Faith! I think ’tis the poorest ever I heard of. You will be robbed for your pains.” The smile disappeared, and a look of deep concern spread over his countenance.

“Robbed!”

“Aye, that you will. I have seen more of the world than you have, monsieur. There are a dozen men on this ship who would split your wizen for a piece of silver, let alone gold. Show your *louis d’or* to these beggars, and your money will not be all that you will lose. By the Saints! It makes me shiver to think of it, it does.”

“But Captain Jean is an honest man. He has treated us kindly on the voyage.”

“A lot of men are honest until you show them gold.”

“’Tis true enough, Barney, and yet would I trust to Captain Jean, were it—”

She turned quickly, as the sound of a scuffle

came to her ears, in time to see Yellow Eyes kick savagely at the mastiff. The man had evidently come up unawares close by to where they stood, but what he had heard of their conversation they could not tell. The dog, yelping with pain, picked himself up from the deck, and rushed upon the tongueless man, ears back, white fangs gleaming wickedly in his half-grown jaws. Yellow Eyes raised his foot again, and Nancy, picking up a handspike, dealt him a blow in the face that made him measure his length on the deck. He was on his feet in an instant, with a deep cut in his forehead, and his yellow eyes full of blood, and with a roar of rage hurled himself upon her. He drew his knife as he sprang, a wicked blade which was no new sight to her.

They say that, as a person drowns, his whole life comes back in retrospect in that one last crowded instant. Nancy found time to regret that she had not denounced Yellow Eyes the first day out, that she had deemed it the part of prudence to keep a secret, even from Barney, the things she had witnessed in the forecastle. Because the man who had been missed had been

deemed a worthless jailbird at best, who doubtless had cast himself into the sea in a fit of despondency, she had been content to remain silent, lest she could not prove the crime, and so would suffer herself in the end. And now, for her forbearance, she was to feel the same knife in her own throat.

She grasped the handspike with a firmer clutch, and met the blow as it descended, and parried it. Then she saw the lean body of the mastiff, a dun streak across her eyes, saw him leap for the corded neck of Yellow Eyes, saw the knife flash in a great circle, and saw the dog met in mid-air and fall backward, its right foreleg cut off at the shoulder. As the dog fell, Barney, the Irish lad, leaped at Yellow Eyes. The freckles on his face were gone now, wiped out by the rush of blood to his skin, which was scarlet, as all the fighting instinct of his race was aroused. He hurled himself between Nancy and her assailant, but the boy was no match for the powerful arms and shoulders of the dumb man, who sent him reeling back into the gunwales, where he fell a crumpled heap in the scuppers, and then

raised his knife and sprang at the girl with the fury of a beast.

A great crowd came rushing to where they struggled, shouting, "A fight! A fight!" and got about them in a ring to witness the sport.

Nancy grasped her handspike with a firmer grip. And then she saw something—the girl Cherie. A Cavalier, rather down at the heel, but unmistakably of a different stamp from the vagabonds and rascals who comprised the human cargo of the *Baptiste*, came running along the deck, not knowing just what was going on to cause so much excitement, and anxious to see. As he passed Cherie she pulled his sword from his belt, and, squirming through the throng, stooped down, and sent it spinning along the deck to where Nancy stood.

She reached for it quickly—all this in the flash of an eyelid—and Yellow Eyes, although he little knew it, was face to face with a pupil of one of the best swordsmen in Cromwell's army. A smile came over Nancy's face. Her eyes danced, the rich warm blood of her suffused her face with a rosy glow of zest for her father's favorite sport. He had often told her

that he had taught her to fence as well as his son might have done at her age. The recollection of it gave her confidence, Yellow Eyes hesitated, and in that moment of hesitation was almost lost. For she had the blade at his throat now, and the cheers of the crowd in her ears, and in her heart a recklessness she had never known before, that intoxicated her.

But fate, as if she had reserved him for another end, came to his rescue now. Pierre the navigator, Pierre the faithful friend, hearing the great din and learning what it was all about, for the first time left the helm without a hand upon it, an act that changed the whole current of Nancy Chillingworth's life and his own.

As he came plunging down the slanting deck, bellowing like a wild bull, and tossing out of his way those who impeded his progress, a great wave striking the ship on her quarter, she fell off her course, and the sea broke over her as she lay in the trough and deluged her with a flood of water from the forecandle aft to the binnacles, the shivering sails cracking like thunder, just as the mastiff, on three legs,

its body covered with blood, leaped again for Yellow Eyes. The wave struck them full, and man, girl, and dog went down in a heap together. Nancy's head hit the gunwale, so that she lay quite still with eyes closed, and all thought she had been killed. Barney and Cherie were quickly at her side and bending over her:

"Mon Dieu!" cried out Cherie. "It is a woman!"

The great crowd was suddenly silent, as they picked her up and carried her into the cabin, Barney's face gone white as chalk, and Pierre's eyes blinking and snapping at a faster rate than they had ever blinked and snapped before.

As for Yellow Eyes, his salt-water bath had taken the fight out of him. He slunk forward, his yellow eyes like molten gold, his tongueless gullet distended, so that those who saw him turned their heads and shuddered; and some of them fondled the dog affectionately, and bound up its wounds.

CHAPTER V

BRAS-DE-MORT

Two days later they dropped anchor in a little cove on the northern side of Tortuga, their voyage at an end.

The night had been one of wretchedness and misery for Nancy, who had recovered consciousness to find herself among the women in the cabin, where a bunk next to Cherie's had been found for her. She needed no one to tell her, then, that the secret she had guarded had been discovered, and apprehensions on this score filled her with fear, the more so, since she asked in vain to see Barney.

"Captain Jean's orders," was all the explanation she could receive from Cherie, who fretted over her like a grandmother with a new baby. But although she was good to her, and nursed her tenderly, she dared not disobey, nor did any favorable opportunity offer for the boy to be smuggled in to her, a thing that she was

most desirous of, in order that she might ask his advice, having always found him wise beyond his years.

As for herself, no cajolery nor subterfuge could induce her to disclose her identity. She kept her mouth as tight as wax.

"Forgive me, my dear," said Cherie, "for the exclamation which destroyed your incognito, but it sprang impulsively to my lips. And now, I fear, I have done you a grave harm—put you in greater danger than you were in before."

"I know you meant me no injury," replied Nancy, "for you have given me assurances of your friendship that I cannot doubt. But for your quick wit in passing me the sword I should now be—overboard, I guess, by this time."

She shuddered, but smiled again.

"I dare say, though," she added, "that my misfortunes will be no more in one rôle than in another. And now that I am in my proper person once more, I shall know the better how to act for my protection. Perhaps as a woman I shall be better off than as a boy."

"That," answered Cherie, with a shrug of her shoulders, "depends a good deal, I should say, upon whether you prefer to work for a man as his slave or his wife. The wages, I imagine, are the same in either case," she finished bitterly.

Nancy sat bolt upright at this.

"Wife!"

"*Oui*, they'll have us one way or another, you may be sure."

The girl said nothing more after this, but Captain Jean coming into the cabin presently, she drew him aside.

"May I not have your consent to go on deck, monsieur?" she asked. "Or have the boy Barney come here to me, that I may speak with him, my friend, upon the situation in which I now find myself?"

"The consent is not mine to give, mademoiselle," he answered. "Monsieur d'Ogeron has come aboard, and is in command. He has heard your story, and is most anxious to speak with you. It is to fetch you to him that I have come."

"Who is Monsieur d'Ogeron, that you, the

captain, should take orders from him?" demanded Nancy.

"He is the governor and major of the island, mademoiselle, and since he is supreme here under the French West India Company, his word is final."

"Then I fear 'twill be but a waste of time to make of you a request that lies even nearer yet to my heart," the girl answered. "I had hoped you might grant it me."

"Right willingly I would if it were within my power."

"Is it, then, not within your power to carry me back to France with you, and the boy Barney, too? We came not willingly, monsieur."

"That I know and deeply regret. But such is the system, and I must bring as safely as I may the cargo that they deliver to me. They would not permit me to take you back. I fear another future awaits you here."

"Could you not smuggle me back then, if I should hide on board? You see, monsieur, I lay bare to you the secret I have nurtured, and throw myself upon your honor."

"I will not betray you."

"If I should hide myself aboard, would you protect me, monsieur?"

"I could not."

"Why?"

"I carry back with me, mademoiselle, thirty Englishmen, as prisoners, evil fellows and trouble-makers, who have refused to submit to the government his Majesty has established here in Tortuga. They have sought to seize the island from France."

"Englishmen!" cried Nancy. "Why, monsieur, I, too—"

She stopped. Captain Jean looked at her narrowly.

"Mademoiselle is English, too, *hein!*" She raised her hand, and placed her finger on her lips. "*Sacré bleu!* I will not betray you."

"So you see, Captain Jean, I should be among friends."

"In irons, yes, mademoiselle," he laughed.

"In irons!"

"*Mon dieu!* Yes, prisoners—irons. What is there so strange about that combination? We are from Tortuga for Toulon, and were you among the English prisoners you would be

clapped into the bagnio with them and sent thence to the galleys. You would do better in the Indies, mademoiselle."

He led the way on deck, she following dejectedly, and so she saw Tortuga, its wooded crest and palm-strewn sands bathed in a flood of tropical sunlight which made her, coming thus suddenly into the light, blink with a speed that would have done credit to Pierre himself.

Captain Jean pointed upward, where a fort and castle, with two guns, commanded the cove in which the *Baptiste* lay at anchor. Perched upon the side of a heavily timbered and rocky mountain, it seemed in danger of slipping off into the sea.

"In there," he said briefly, giving her a knowing wink.

"The Englishmen?"

"*Oui*, the English dogs! Pardon, mademoiselle, I forget myself. The English women, they are beautiful, charming. The English men—cutthroats!"

And so they passed into the master's cabin, or roundhouse. A gentleman arose as they entered, and came toward them, and Nancy,

feeling his eyes upon her, lowered her own, and for the first time upon that voyage, blushed.

"She is here, monsieur," announced Captain Jean briefly, and then, something in the girl's drawn face and tired eyes giving him a boldness he had not assumed before, he added quickly, "She has been kidnaped, and comes not of her own will."

"Kidnaped!" D'Ogeron scowled and shrugged his shoulders. "'Tis what they all say." He turned to Nancy, and the girl shrank beneath the admiration in his eyes. "You came as a servant, mademoiselle," he said. "You will remain as a wife."

"Truly, I came not at all of my own wish, but was kidnaped, as Captain Jean has informed you."

"Tush! 'Tis the story they all tell. Glad enough for a chance for a free voyage to the Indies, and begging off when once they land."

"I am not begging off." Her eyes flashed with a look that General Sidney might have recognized and loved. "I am an English woman, aye, and proud of it, and not afraid

to proclaim it. I claim my rights as an English woman, monsieur. My country and yours are not at war."

"Below the tropic, they are, as you will find, mademoiselle."

"Even so, since when have Frenchmen fought women, monsieur?"

"You have me there," the governor laughed. "Fight them? *Mon dieu! Non! non!* We love them, my friend."

"Monsieur chooses to be insulting."

"Come, my pretty! A saucy jade, eh, captain?" The honest sailor's face darkened at this, and he pulled his beard a savage jerk that was like to tear it from his chin. "And of the quality, too, or I am no judge of a woman's fine points. What is your name, mademoiselle?"

Nancy looked at Captain Jean, but finding his eyes averted from hers, and seeing by his attitude that he had done for her all that he could, she realized that she must look now to herself alone for protection.

"I cannot tell you that," she answered, "al-

though I can assure you it is one not unknown in France as in England."

D'Ogeron, a handsome man a little under middle age, in Rhinegrave breeches seamed all over with scarlet and silver lace, sleeves whipped with ribbons and cannons of the same fluttering material at his knees, caressed his mustache at this. Then, stepping up to her, he sought to take her by the hand. She drew back quickly, her face flushing a crimson color, her blue eyes flashing. He laughed, a good-natured laugh, and tried to slip his arm about her waist, whereat she sprang across the cabin, and placed the table between herself and him, and so stood there, glaring, her nose quivering with resentment, until, as he sought to follow, she found the way clear to the companionway, and springing up, gained the deck, leaving Captain Jean with a grin on his face, and d'Ogeron wearing a flabby smile.

The nondescript crowd of passengers were crowded into the waist, lining the rail. They gazed with eager eyes upon the island, and watched the crowd of ragged and tattered men

who had flocked down to the beach, where they stood about in groups, repaying all their curious glances with interest.

Nancy, singling out Barney and Cherie, who stood together at the beak-head ladder in the bow, wormed her way through the mob and joined them, and was received with expressions of liveliest interest and delight. The first boat having been lowered, and having no possessions to impede them, they scrambled down, among the first to leave, and soon were pulling off for the shore, with Cherie perched in the bow.

As they came into shoal water, a man who stood apart from the others on the beach waded out, and, seizing the boat, hauled her up. He offered his hand to the girl crouching on the bow like some carved figurehead, and Cherie, placing her own within it, was deftly swung ashore. Nancy and Barney following her, they looked about them upon as strange a crew of poor devils as might have been found in all the world.

Nearly all of the islanders were Frenchmen, with here and there a Portuguese, or a renegade Spaniard who had fled to the French

colony to escape the penalty of his crimes among people of his own kind. Dirty, unwashed, unkempt, with matted hair falling to their shoulders, over faces baked red by the sun of the tropics, they were clad for the most part in short canvas or cotton breeches, ragged and torn, frayed at the knees, with coarse cotton shirts hanging over them. Filth, smoke, bloodstains, and grease had dyed them to the color of a rotten sail. Their hats, fashioned from the skins of goats or wild animals, were brimless, little more than rude caps. Many of them boasted no other covering than the thatch with which nature had endowed them. Around their waists were belts of untanned hides, ornamented with so many knives and pistols that one would have thought that slaughter was their sole occupation; nor would one have been mistaken, for it was. From their shoulders hung leathern pouches filled with powder and shot, and nearly every one carried a musket. Those who were not barefooted as well as hatless wore rough brogans which had been fashioned by their own unskilful hands, from the skin of the wild pig.

A roaring tide of shouts and exclamations ebbed and flowed through them as, gesticulating and grimacing, they rushed out to meet the small boats from the ship which had begun to discharge their loads of human freight, inquiring as to the news from Europe, to learn, perchance, by vague and adroit questioning, so as not to disclose their own identities, if any among the new arrivals came from parts whence they themselves hailed, and knew aught of friends or relatives.

With the landing of every fresh boat, as the newcomers mingled with those on shore, the din and confusion increased. Many of the men had been in the Indies for ten or twenty years, and the women were like creatures from some other world. They stood around on shuffling feet and with gaping mouths, only the more daring among them offering to address these strange beings who had come among them to be their wives and share their wretchedness.

He who had assisted Cherie to land, a young fellow of thirty in the threadbare dress of a gentleman, escorted her gallantly into the shade

of a palm, which grew close to the water's edge, but at some distance from the point where the boats were landing.

"Mademoiselle," said he, taking off his hat and making her a sweeping bow, "it honors me to offer you the protection of my hand, and my heart also," he added, with mock courtesy, and yet with a note of manliness in his voice which the girl, giving him a quick glance from her dark eyes, was not slow to recognize.

"Monsieur is an impetuous lover," she smiled, sarcasm, raillery, and pathos blended in her low tones. "He wears his heart upon his sleeve."

"You misjudge me, mademoiselle. No sudden fancy drives me thus to a declaration of tenderness toward you. Long since, when first I learned of this project of the Governor's, I made up my mind to wed the first woman who stepped ashore, would she but have me. I, you see, am a fatalist. You were the first—and quite well satisfied I am, mademoiselle, with the kindness of fate."

"*Merci!* You turn a compliment prettily. You offer me your heart and hand. I accept

them," and Cherie held out her hand to him, and grew suddenly shy when he took it and pressed it to his lips.

"You flatter me, and raise me in my own estimation. I cannot be so low a creature as — I have sometimes thought myself to be, since you—"

"Monsieur flatters himself," she interrupted, laughing.

"Ah!"

"I, too, am a fatalist."

"I do not comprehend."

"I made an oath, when I turned my back upon all that lies behind me, that I would take for lord and master the first man who offered me that honor, were he the devil himself."

"You are frank, mademoiselle."

"As you were."

"Quite true. We are well met. It is a bargain, then."

"I am ready when the priest is."

"I have no name to offer you, mademoiselle."

"I understand. Nor I one to surrender. I did that long, long ago, when all the world was young. Thou art getting no vestal, mon-

sieur," she added faintly, turning her face, her eyes upon the ground, while the blood mounted to her cheeks.

"Thou can blush still, mademoiselle, and so thou art not bad. I take thee without knowing, or caring to know, who thou art. If anybody from whence thou camest would have thee, thou wouldst not have come in quest of me. I do not desire thee to give me an account of thy past conduct, because I have no right to be offended at it at the time when thou wast at liberty to behave either well or ill, according to thy own pleasure. Give me only thy word for the future; I acquit thee of the past."

He raised from his shoulder the musket which he carried.

"This," he added, "will revenge me of thy breach of faith. If thou shouldst prove false, this will surely be true to my aim."

She bent her head in assent.

"And thou?"

"I will cherish thee and love thee and be kind to thee until the end," he replied with increasing intensity, so that she looked at him,

full into the eyes, then turned her head aside.

When next he looked at her, her eyes were wet. He smiled at her and took her by the arm, as Nancy and Barney, who had been searching for them in the crowds, came up to where they stood. Cherie motioned to her companion.

"We are to be married," she said simply, throwing her arms around Nancy's neck and weeping. "Ah, mademoiselle!"

"Mademoiselle!" exclaimed the man, looking at Nancy more closely. "*Mon dieu!* Pardon, mademoiselle. I mistook you for a *petit garçon*. I assure you your disguise is perfect. Perfect! And—" with a significant glance at the rough crew frolicking on the beach—"if you will accept my advice, it is that you preserve your incognito."

"The advice is excellent," answered Nancy, "but unhappily it comes too late."

"Ah!"

"The discovery was made on shipboard."

"And through me, too," said Cherie, with a gesture of despair.

"Nay, my friend, do not blame thyself for

what must certainly have been disclosed in no great time," said Nancy. "I could not much longer have pretended to be aught save that which I truly am, a very forlorn and unhappy girl."

"*Sacré!*" cried the Frenchman. "It is too bad. I greatly fear that before nightfall you will find yourself wed to one of these greasy cattle-hunters and buccaneers—and then, may God have mercy on your soul!"

Nancy looked afar off to where the ragged crest of the wooded mountain cut the azure of the tropic sky.

"No," she answered softly, "not while that cliff is yonder."

"Don't say that," interrupted Barney. "Why, it's wicked. And besides, we're all here to look out for you and save you from harm."

"Thank you, Barney. I know I can depend upon you—but, after all, what can anyone do?"

"Oh! There'll be a way out of this. But I don't blame you for being down at the mouth. Why, if they tried to make me marry

one of these men, I'd—I'd—I don't know what I'd do. I'd kill him!"

Nancy threw back her head and laughed a merry, ringing laugh.

"Ah, Barney boy," she said, "with you for my defender I should not fear."

"Mademoiselle leaves me out!" cried the Frenchman in an injured tone, thumping himself grandly upon the chest. "While Bras-de-Mort has a bullet for his musket, it is at her service."

"*Hein!* So I am to be Madame Bras-de-Mort, yes?" cried Cherie. "I thought you had no name, monsieur? I assure you 'tis a good one, and satisfies me to my great content. But if you had seen how well our friend defends herself, maybe you would not think it necessary to offer her your deadly arm. She will marry no common cattle-hunter. No doubt the governor has reserved her for his bride."

"Then do I pity her indeed," said the one who had called himself "Bras-de-Mort," his face very serious. "The governor has had three wives, in the short time I have been here."

Sacré! He lays a wife aside as though it were his coat."

"Still," said Nancy, when they had stood in silence listening to the soft murmur of the sea, and the rustling of the palm leaves in the wind, "I do fear the governor, for all his power here, less than I do fear the dumb man."

She pointed down the beach where Yellow Eyes was plowing through the sand towards them.

CHAPTER VI

THE CASTLE ON THE HILL

To escape the baneful eyes of the tongueless man, and the hideous sight of his fleshless skull and bloodshot lips, Mistress Nancy made a wide detour through the palm-trees, followed by Barney. She knew not whither she was going; her sole desire was to be alone, to collect her thoughts and have an opportunity to discuss in peace and quiet with the Irish boy plans for their escape, for that she would die rather than submit to the fate that awaited her here in Tortuga she was firmly resolved.

The blood that had been resolute enough to send an English king to the scaffold flowed in the girl's veins. She felt a strengthening of all the fibers of her being under the pressure of her troubles, which, instead of making her weary, clarified her mind and gave her unwonted energy, first, to see in what sort of

place she was, and to determine then what avenues of escape offered.

She was hungry, and Three-legs, the mastiff dog, which trotted at her side, looked up into her face with eloquent eyes which proclaimed in unmistakable language just what he would have thought of a bone. As for Barney, he had been half-starved so often that his stomach gave him little trouble, seeing that it expected nothing much of anything and was always as grateful as astonished at any tidbit which came its way. Still, they had eaten no food since the night before, when they had dined on a couple of biscuit and a little brandy and water in the bottom of their tankard. So they turned their attention to the beach where there was every evidence of culinary activity, and whence was wafted to them a delicious odor.

A great fire had been lighted in the open space between the sea and the cluster of shacks and huts which served the colonists for a town, a short distance from the water's edge. Over it a whole ox was roasting on an enormous spit, sending forth an aroma that, as they drew near, became maddening. The blaze was sur-

rounded by a noisy throng, those who had landed that day from the *Baptiste* mingling with their new-found friends and fellow-countrymen, who paid clumsy court to the women or fought among themselves for the favors of the more attractive ones, who, finding themselves eagerly sought after among so many men, were not slow to exercise those arts of coquetry best calculated to win for themselves the pick of the prospective husbands.

Scarcely a damsel but was surrounded by a dozen rough gallants, who proffered them the choicest cuts from the barbecue, offered them cups of wine from the casks which had been broached under the palm-trees, showering them at the same time with uncouth compliments and speeches that were as pretty as they, who had been so long outside the pale of civilization, knew, or remembered, how to make. A squalid lot of wretches they were, too, the scrapings of the slums and alleys of Europe, vagabonds and rascals, indentured servants escaped from their masters in Jamaica when Cromwell had added that island to England's overseas possessions; runaway slaves, who had

been sold for debt at Port Royal; outcasts from the settlements in Virginia and New England; idlers, ne'er-do-wells, thieves, pickpockets, murderers, escaped felons, jailbirds from the hulks in the Mediterranean or from Newgate, the very scum of society. They had drifted to the Caribbean as froth collects at the center of a boiling pot. Some among them were soldiers, veterans of the wars which had convulsed Europe for a generation, whose campaigns had taught them only lessons of idleness and violence.

Finding Hispaniola, Spain's first great possession in the New World, all but deserted by the gold-mad adventurers who had pushed on to the Main in quest of vaster wealth, deserted but for a few settlements on the coast, the native population exterminated, and their places in the mines and on the plantations filled by negro slaves from the Guinea coast, and the whole island over-run by wild cattle and hogs, the progeny of domestic animals which had been brought over by those who had followed Columbus, these outcast derelicts had turned hunters of the wild bulls which they slew for

their meat and hides. Going off into the deep forests, two together, usually, for they hunted in couples, with their muskets and ammunition, and a pack of dogs to aid them in the chase, they would kill as many animals as sufficed for their needs, curing the meat after a fashion which had been learned from the Caribbee Indians. The beef, cut into long strips, was smoked or barbecued over a *boucan*, a grating of green sticks, so that the hunters became known as *boucaniers*, or, as the word was twisted by English tongues, buccaneers.

Nancy, joining the mob around the fire, thought she had never seen before such evil-looking fellows. Soon she and Barney, wedging in among them, secured a chunk of smoking meat for themselves, and a juicy joint for Three-legs, and withdrawing to the shade of a near-by palm, with a basin of water to wash down their meal, munched away with the greatest contentment.

In this pleasant frame of mind Mistress Chillingworth, happening to look up, saw approaching her the man she least wished to see, Monsieur d'Ogeron, the governor himself,

grandly attired for the festivities, and smiling with satisfaction at the huge success of his undertaking now so happily consummated in the arrival of the cargo of brides from France.

"Hist!" whispered Barney, nudging her. "Here comes the major of the island. They pointed him out to me a while ago. If you could get on the right side of him now, he could soon settle the question of going back to France."

"No, Barney, he will not help me," she answered. "He means me no good, I fear. My heart tells me to expect of him nought but ill. I have already craved of him the privilege of returning on the *Baptiste*, and it has been refused me."

D'Ogeron was now arrived at where they sat. Barney jumped to his feet, pulling his forelock and bowing. Nancy sat still and turned her face away.

"I am come to offer you the hospitality of the island, mademoiselle," began the governor. "Tortuga bids you welcome, and hopes that you will long abide with us here."

"You are kind, monsieur," she replied with

a touch of bitterness in her voice, "but I fear I can never be happy in this place, torn, as I have been, from home and kin. I beseech you to permit me to return on the ship."

D'Ogeron shook his head and cast at her a look which made her blood turn hot with rage within her.

She arose abruptly, and, when the Governor offered her his arm, she ran away, like an angry schoolgirl. Barney, with his fists doubled up and his brows scowling, and Three—legs, showing his white teeth over his curling—lip, followed her, as if to serve notice that Mistress Nancy had two friends upon whom to—count in an emergency.

She did not see d'Ogeron, stamping his foot— with vexation, call up from the crowd a slouch—ing fellow, and, pointing out to him the figure— of the girl, say something in a low tone, which— the man agreed to, as the shakes of his head indicated. Nor did she observe that this fellow, following her, kept her within his sight there—after. But if she had noted these things, it is doubtful if they would have made her feel less quiet than she was.

Boy, girl and dog, were swallowed up in the crowd which grew more noisy with every fresh cask that, rolled up from the rough storehouses lining the shores of the cove, was stove in with shouts of glee and bursts of song. Singing, playing, scuffling, stuffing themselves with the good things from the feast which had been provided for the occasion, and washing out their dusty throats with great gulps of wine, they raised their voices to a chorus that might have been heard at the other end of the island. The sailors from the ship had come among them and added their merrymaking to the general din.

Some of the women had already married the men who had chosen them, or fought for them. As Nancy approached one group, which seemed more quiet than the rest, she saw that the interest was centered in Cherie and Bras-de-Mort who were standing hand in hand beneath a palm, while the padre, the little French monk she had first seen in Lille, half tipsy, his round red face shining like a tropic moon, was reciting the marriage service, stumbling over the words by reason of hav-

ing one eye on a cask that was being tapped by a couple of frolicking mariners. A storm of cheers greeted the conclusion of the service, as every one rushed up helter-skelter to kiss the bride.

Cherie caught sight of Nancy's face, and, slipping away, came over to where she was standing and threw her arms around the girl's neck.

"I fear for you in all this madness, mademoiselle," she said, a look of deep concern in her dark eyes. "For myself—I am used to such orgies, and tired of them, too. Now, thank God, I feel a greater security than I have ever known. My husband is a man—a real man. You would scarcely believe me, mademoiselle, but I am—happy. And he will protect you, too, my friend, never fear."

"I thank you both from the depths of my heart," said Nancy simply, kissing her, "but in the long run I must look out for myself, and that I shall do."

"You do not know what I know. I must warn you. The governor has given it out that you are reserved for him."

"His eyes have told me as much."

"After all, if you could be philosophical about it, perhaps it would be the best thing. As the governor's lady—well, there are compensations in that station."

"The position is scarcely permanent enough," replied Nancy drily. "It is one I do not crave, for any length of time."

"Has he said aught to you since you came ashore?"

"His actions have spoken more plainly than any words."

She turned, with a feeling that some one was looking at her, and saw the priest, and by his side d'Ogeron again.

The governor tried to take her by the hand, and securing it, sought to embrace her. But she tore herself away from his grasp, kicking and struggling, with such good purpose that finally she was able to wrench herself free. The crowd had closed in around them, shouting and laughing. The governor's face was a thunder-cloud.

"A very wildcat of a woman, monsieur," hic-coughed the monk, holding his cassock up about

his knees as he jumped up and down, his ro-tund little body shaking with mirth. "By our Lady! A wildcat! A tigress!"

"I shall tame her quickly enough," burst forth the governor. "Out of my way, you beggars! Are these the best manners you have that you should stand about gaping at me? As for you, mademoiselle, the padre will accommodate us with the ritual within the hour."

He turned and strode away, nor vouchsafed any further wedding announcement.

The crowd drew back respectfully before Nancy at this. "The governor's lady! The governor's lady!" she heard them saying, the words passing from lip to lip, until it seemed to have spread in a twinkling all over the island.

Scarce three hundred yards off shore, for the deep water made close in under the over-hanging cliffs, lay the *Saint Jean Baptiste* in a very fair berth, anchors at bow and stern for fear of her being driven ashore in a sudden squall; so close in, that it seemed as if a stone might have been dropped upon her decks from the castle perched upon the hillside.

Nancy, wandering down to the beach with Barney and Three-legs, could come to no conclusion upon the situation in which she found herself. She had been given an hour, sixty minutes more of liberty, and then—

She shivered at the thought of the alternative as the words she had so bravely spoken that morning came rushing back upon her from her memory.

"No," she had said, "not while that cliff is yonder!"

Her eyes, fastened so longingly upon the ship in the harbor, she raised now to the fort and castle on the crest of the timbered, rocky steep which overhung the cove. And as she looked, there flashed into her mind what Captain Jean had told her on shipboard that morning.

"Barney," she cried, turning to the Irish boy with sudden resolve in her eyes, "I am going to put my life and honor in your keeping. Do you know, lad, in that fort on the hill are thirty Englishmen, prisoners, destined for the hulks at Toulon."

"Thirty Englishmen!"

"Hush! Not so loud. Aye, thirty of our countrymen. For though we fight one another, Barney, we English and the Irish are of one blood when it comes to a foreign foe."

"Faith, and I guess that's so, true enough. But how came the English there?"

"Prisoners they are, lad, who refused to see Tortuga seized by the French, and so are going back in chains. It makes my blood hot to think of Englishmen in such a plight, but my own troubles made me forget them until now, fool and ingrate that I am. If they knew of my predicament I warrant they would not desert me."

"I see what you're driving at," he shouted, his eyes dancing.

"Shh!" she cautioned.

"It could be done!" Barney's voice sank to a whisper, and his red rag of a tongue licked his lips with delight. "By nightfall all these people here will be drunk."

"'Tis what I had counted upon."

"And the sailors from the ship, they are ashore and busy at the wine-casks, too."

The boy's eyes narrowed to slits. Into the

face of Nancy flamed a new light of hope and courage. The fighting blood of the Chillingworths was leaping through her veins.

"We must make it succeed, boy," she whispered, looking upward at the castle again.

"But the keys? We cannot batter down walls of masonry."

"Then we shall gain entrance some other way, Barney. And take this charge upon your soul: go among the men and learn what guard watches at the fort—and how many mariners have been left upon the ship. Leave the rest to me."

"Aye, that I will."

"Now, be off with you and mind you ask your questions sagely, that no one may suspect your motive."

She watched the boy run off and disappear in the crowd, and then, following more slowly by another route, was soon in the midst of the merrymakers, searching from group to group, this time with no desire to conceal herself from Monsieur d'Ogeron.

Glancing back, her heart stood still when she saw a man creep from a thicket near where

she had stood with Barney, and come slinking along under the trees—a powerfully built man, with long arms, and a skull that shone in the fierce light of the descending sun as if no shred of flesh covered the naked bone, a man whose yellow eyes she saw even at that distance gleaming like molten gold.

CHAPTER VII

SOMEBODY SETS A TRAP

There was something so sinister and furtive about Yellow Eyes' movements that for an instant fear raised its ugly head and laid a clammy hand upon Nancy's heart. Had she been spied upon? Had the plot she and Barney had just laid so carefully and boldly been disclosed?

She watched him, fascinated, to see if she could discover in his actions anything to answer the questions that concerned her now so deeply. He was coming closer to her, until she could see the wicked glitter in those burning eyes, the toothless gums, the great, red throat of him, for his mouth was opened wide, and he was panting from his exertions and the heat, panting without a tongue. He passed her, and she read in the yellow orbs which glowed in his head a message as plainly writ as if it had been upon the printed page

of a book, as she had read his silent commands when she lay in the straw in the cart, and knew as well as if he had spoken that he would kill her if she did not lie still.

Three-legs, who had followed her and was resting himself on his haunches at her feet and licking the stump of his leg which was now almost healed, showed his teeth, and would have sprung upon his enemy had not the girl held him back by main strength, both hands grasping the loose skin of his neck.

Yellow Eyes passed on with a parting leer, his strange eyes, which she sought in vain to avoid, now burning almost red like coals upon a forge, and left her standing there in deep perplexity. And thus d'Ogeron found her lost in reverie. She saw that he had dressed himself in finery in the mode, which, she made no doubt, had been brought to him from Paris on the *Baptiste*. It was a scarlet riding-suit, with black silk stockings, and a new short coat, which was just then becoming fashionable. His hat was a felt, broad of brim, and with a great plume upon it which became him handsomely. There was also a sword at his side,

a slender blade, with a jeweled hilt that sparkled in the sun.

"I trust that mademoiselle has lost her sulks," he smiled pleasantly enough, although his eyes were cold. "I assure you, they are not becoming to so charming a creature. May I hope that we have made you feel at home?"

"Monsieur has been most kind," she answered. "I am most grateful."

"Your words delight me, my dear."

He moistened his lips as if he would say something more, and then, hesitating, offered her his arm in silence, and this time, dropping him a courtesy, she took it and fell into step with him at his side. They passed among the rough crew of roisterers, who winked and smirked at them knowingly, until the rosy blood mantled her face and she hung her head, pretending not to hear the coarse jests and compliments showered upon them.

"The monk," said d'Ogeron presently, "awaits your pleasure. I need not tell you how eager I am to hear pronounced those words which will entitle me to give you that protection which one so beautiful and charm-

ing, so unfortunately situated as I realize you are, deserves at my hands. *Sacré!* I hope the marriage service has not been worn out. Truly, it has been put to a strain this day. Fifty happy couples billing and cooing in Tortuga this evening, where only yesterday were but rough men fighting and quarreling with one another.

"Behold these smiling brides and happy bridegrooms! And soon we shall be numbered among the lot. Come, mademoiselle, impatience fires my very soul. I long to make you happy."

"That you can do very easily, monsieur."

"Ah! It is my one wish."

"Then bid me depart in peace, monsieur."

"*Sacré bleu!* Have I not said that is impossible?"

"I cannot live here in this rough place," she answered. "I should die of exposure in one of these huts."

"Huts! *Mon Dieu!* think you the governor of Tortuga lives in a shack like a common cattle-hunter? Your nest will be yonder, in the castle on the hill, mademoiselle. The 'Dove-

Cote' it was called by my predecessor, Levasseur, who erected the fort there, and how appropriately!"

"Fort?" she queried. "I thought I understood you to say 'castle,' m'sieu."

"*Oui*. It is the same thing, part castle, part fort, my residence and the defense of Tortuga as well."

"But I should die in those stone walls."

"*Diable!* Die? Stone walls? In this climate? I will surround you with all the luxuries of Europe and the Indies. You shall dress in silks and satins, sleep in a bed a viceroy's wife bemoans this very minute, have slaves to wait upon you. That castle is a storehouse of treasure, mademoiselle, packed with the riches plundered from a dozen galleons by these brave freebooters of mine, and brought here for safe keeping."

"I fear you do exaggerate, monsieur, to tempt me. It seems strange that so much wealth should be in a place like this."

"Exaggerate! Your own eyes shall see to your satisfaction."

"Aye, but then 'twill be too late."

"Why, a hundred men could tell you that I speak the truth. *Sacré!* Come see for yourself."

"Whither, monsieur?"

"To the castle."

"Now?"

"That is it. Some day there will be a road up the cliff. At present you must climb."

"That I can do very easily."

"You will go, then?"

"Of course."

"'Twill give you an opportunity, too, to change your dress for the wedding. You shall select what you wish from my chests, and garb yourself befitting your station. Stupid! I should have thought of it before. Shall we start at once?"

"With all my heart," replied Nancy.

Her voice now was soft, low, caressing. She gave him a look from her wide blue eyes that dazzled him and set him to pulling at his mustache with vast content.

"Then I am at your service."

"Let me first tell my comrade that I am going," she parried, for she now perceived Bar-

ney at a little distance off, signaling to her.

She nodded to the governor, and running down the beach, with Three-legs leaping and barking behind, came up with the boy, panting and out of breath.

"How now, Barney?" she asked in a half-whisper, and laughing in spite of herself at his appearance, for his shock of red hair was so brushed up around his ears and over his forehead that it looked like a flaming battle-flag.

"We're in luck," he chuckled gleefully. "Things couldn't be better. The fort is all but deserted. Six men were left on guard when the watch changed at noon, but four have sneaked down for the rum and wine and women, and the other two must be pretty tipsy by this time, for they have had a cask sent up to them."

"And how of our countrymen, lad?"

"The English prisoners are in the pit in the fortified side of the castle, facing the sea. And you were right about it—there are thirty of them. How they can be got at I know not."

"I will attend to that. But of the ship,—didst thou learn aught of the ship?"

"Aye, that I did. All have come ashore save the middle watch, and that greatly reduced; and of those aboard, most have had their turn ashore and have gone back full of food and drink to the ears. The first of the ebb will be at eleven to-night."

"You have thought of everything, Barney!" exclaimed Nancy, her eyes dancing. "Now pay strict heed to what I say. Do you keep Three-legs with you. Now, I am going alone to the fort with the governor. Nay, look not anxious, lad. I go at his request and of my own free will. When we have been gone the space of one-half glass—canst judge the time, Barney? I warrant you, you can. Well, then, when I have been gone for half an hour, do you and the dog follow us. Three-legs will find the path by our scent."

"Then what?"

"We must be guided by circumstances, Barney. When you reach the castle, place yourself in a secluded place as near the entrance as you can safely lie. And if all goes well with

me, I will contrive to let you in or make a signal to you. Much depends on you, Barney boy, more than you know."

"I would lay down my life for you," he answered simply, and neither of them knew then what those words were to mean to both of them.

She grasped his hand at this. Not the soft clasp of a woman did she give him, but the hearty grip of a friend and comrade. She turned away and waved her hand to him, and went back to where the governor stood, and there beside him was Yellow Eyes, tugging at his sleeve and gesticulating vigorously.

Yellow Eyes pointed to the girl as she came up, and from her leveled his bony index finger at the castle on the hill. His burnished eyes seemed afire, his purple lips were twisted and distorted, his tongueless gullet filled with slobber, so disgusting a sight that even d'Ogeron turned away, and tried to push the fellow off.

"*Mon dieu!*" he cried to Nancy. "The rogue is trying to tell me something, but hath not the tongue for his words. What ails thee, wretch? *Sacré!* His eyes pierce my very

soul. I think he hath something to say of the castle, but what I know not. Is it of the castle? Speak, thou rascal!"

Yellow Eyes nodded.

"Ah, I was right then. Well, what is it? What is it, I say!"

He roared at him again in a voice of rage, as if by the volume of the sound he could make the dumb man articulate. And Yellow Eyes merely grimacing at this, and shaking his head, and pointing still at Nancy and the castle, the governor suddenly seized him and shoved him aside.

"Out of my way, rogue. Never, I swear, have I seen so evil a sight. Ha! He understands what I say, well enough. But, of course, he is not dumb from birth, but only because his tongue hath been clipped and so is not a mute. Never mind! Some other time, fellow, you may tell me what you want to say."

But Yellow Eyes, not to be put off so easily, grasped Nancy's arm. She wrenched away. Thinking the man was showing a persistence that might endanger her project, she said:

"'Tis the fellow I fought with on shipboard, monsieur. I suspect he is making a complaint to you against me."

Yellow Eyes quivered with passion at this.

"So that's it!" cried d'Ogeron, the impetuous lover getting the better of the prudent governor. "Off with you, fellow, and let me not see your hideous face again!"

He offered Nancy his arm and escorted her across the open space between the storehouses and the rough huts which composed the settlement.

The day had run its course, and the tropic night which drops so quickly when the sun goes down was all about them with its blackness, shot here and there by murky glares where bonfires blazed on the beach, and by the flickering light of torches. The rough cattle-hunters, who played as strenuously as they worked at their trade in the forests, were still making the island resound with their song and laughter. Now and then they were obliged to step over the recumbent forms of men who had stretched themselves upon the ground to rest

from their mad pleasures, or else because of the wine and brandy which had been drunk in such vast quantities that day.

Nancy, looking about as she walked along, saw neither Cherie nor Bras-de-Mort. She hoped that they had withdrawn from the scene of these orgies, for she had come to feel for the little Parisienne a deep sympathy, and wished that she would be happy with her husband, so strangely found in the New World. Most of the other women were keeping up the festivities as eagerly as their companions, nor were they the less backward at the wine-casks.

At the foot of the cliff, where a well-worn path led upward through the trees, the governor, in his hand a torch he had taken from the crotch of a cedar, went ahead, and, bidding her follow, began the ascent, not without many gasps and sighs, for he was a portly fellow with a big paunch and short legs, and the way was steep. Never a word they said as they toiled upward. After pursuing the path for some little distance, they came to rough steps hewn in the rock, and climbing these for about half the height of the promontory, d'Ogeron came

to a halt upon a little platform, puffing from his exertions.

"From here we climb," he announced briefly, holding the torch aloft, and Nancy saw the rungs of an iron ladder leading upward through the trees and heavy undergrowth which clung to the sides of the cliff.

"Very good, monsieur," she answered him; and so they started once more, hand over hand, foot over foot, until at last they came out into a little clearing where the trees had been hacked away.

The girl, straining her eyes to take in every detail, noted closely the position of the rude fort, or castle as the governor called it, perched upon the mountainside, its gray walls of stone and heavy timbers bathed in a flood of moonlight. In the harbor below them she saw the ghostly outlines of the ship, swinging at her cables, every mast and spar outlined in the soft, silvery radiance.

One part of the fort she observed—all this while the governor struggled to regain his breath—was on a lower level than the rest, being flush with the precipice, which dropped

off abruptly at its foundations. For this reason, and because there were no windows in it that she could see, she concluded that in this part was located the pit that Barney had spoken of, by which she supposed he had meant a dungeon. Through portholes showed the muzzles of two cannon, commanding the harbor.

D'Ogeron beckoned to her, and, still in silence, for he needed his breath for other purposes than speech, marched with a great show of dignity to the heavy door of acajou wood, and, pounding upon it with the hilt of his sword, motioned to her when it had swung open. A black man with a torch in his hand stood in the gloomy aperture. He fastened the door behind them, when they had entered, by dropping a heavy bar into place through iron hooks on either side of the frame, and then showed the way down a long stone-flagged passageway, and through another door, which led off at one side, into a large chamber with a ceiling of hewn beams, in the French style, and a stone floor. At the back the room opened upon a garden enclosed by the other apartments of the fort, all of solid masonry,

in the center of which a fountain splashed musically, the water coming from a natural spring around which the castle had been built. The leaves of mango trees and prickly palms, whose roots were planted in the crevices of the natural rock, stirred uneasily in their sleep, and the heavy odor of the blossoms of the manchineel and the genipa-trees made the soft night air drowsy with scent.

In the middle of the room was a huge table, laid with covers for three, and at the place at the side sat the round-faced monk, the leg of a roasted fowl in one hand and a goblet of wine in the other. Beside his chair, in a deferential attitude, stood a little chap in a dirty smock, with a platter of meat in his hands. From this he was preparing to serve the guest, who was clamoring loudly for more food. Opposite was a couch, made of native woods and reeds, and covered with a red silk scarf beautifully embroidered in gold; and above it, resting upon two pegs that had been driven into the wall, was a silver-mounted musket.

"Mon dieu! Monk, couldst not wait for the wedding feast to begin before stuffing thy-

self?" exploded the governor, gasping for breath, and his face purple from exertion and rage. "One would think you had tasted nothing for a week, yet I myself have seen thee gorging thyself this whole day long."

The monk turned a sheepish countenance towards them at this interruption, and hastily dropped the chicken bones beneath the table.

"Wedding feast!" cried Nancy. "I understand you not, monsieur."

"Be seated, mademoiselle." D'Ogeron bowed, and motioned her to the table. "I hope the viands will tickle your palate. I have scoured the island for meats and fruits, and drawn upon my most prized stores."

"The capon!" interrupted the monk ecstatically, carving off another leg of the fowl as he spoke, and thrusting it between the distended jaws of his little red face, which shone as though it had been greased. "Never have I tasted such a bird. Seasoned? Fit for a queen! And the sauce, mademoiselle! And the fish! Such a fish! And these violet land crabs! How the fragrance salutes my nostrils!"

He shook his head, as if to admit that further words had failed him, and, rolling his eyes at her, drained the wine glass at a gulp, and motioned to the little man in the smock to fill it up again.

"You have trapped me, monsieur," said Mistress Chillingworth, drawing her slim figure up very straight. "I came here not for a wedding feast, but to inspect the wealth with which you promised to endow me."

"The whole castle—everything—shall be yours," replied d'Ogeron, with a grand sweep of his arm. "In my chests and boxes are silks and satins, and velvet goods, in which to swathe your loveliness at your pleasure. You shall have what an empress might seek in vain, the spoil of all these seas, of all the Spanish cities on the isles and Main."

"I trusted to your gallantry as a Frenchman, monsieur. I look to your conscience for better treatment than this you offer me."

"There is no conscience below the tropic, mademoiselle."

"I have brought mine with me, sire."

"If I did deem it best to hasten the happy

hour of our nuptials, it is for you, the woman, to bow to my superior judgment. Be assured I have not acted thus without a view to your happiness and safety. I felt my heart expand within me when first I saw you, mademoiselle. My pity was enlisted in your behalf. You are among rough men. I offer you my protection and my love."

"Love! You know not the meaning of the word. Things have come to a pretty pass, methinks, when cowards prate of love."

D'Ogeron's face darkened at this. Drawing back a chair he curtly motioned her to be seated.

"Enough, mademoiselle!" he said. "You mock me for the honor I would pay you. Better the governor's lady than a courtesan on the streets of Paris."

Nancy's whole body quivered at this insult, as if she had felt the lash of a whip across her face, and, when the Frenchman threw his arm around her waist and tried to draw her to him, she squirmed out of his grasp, and, bending suddenly, gave him so sharp a blow behind the

knees that he went sprawling, so astonished that he was speechless. He lay there blinking at her, the room in silence, save for Nancy's heavy breathing, the monk with a chicken wing half-way to his mouth.

"*Sacré!* What a wife you will make, when I shall have tamed you," said the governor, rolling over upon his back, and trying frantically to get upon his feet.

"You should be a judge, monsieur," said Nancy.

"What's that?"

"How many others have passed this way before me? Three I know on. Where are they now? Buried beneath the flagstones where I stand, perchance."

"Curse the vixen!" cried the governor, struggling to his knees. "Stop her, monk! Stop her, I say!"

"Mayhap it is their spirits I hear wailing in the garden," said Nancy. "Listen!"

A moaning sound, half groan, half shriek, echoed dismally through the dark passageway outside.

"Mother of Mary! Save me!" cried d'Ogeron, getting upon his feet, and shaking so at the knees he was like to fall again.

The moaning sound floated in to them again.

"Hide me, monk," begged d'Ogeron, the tremor upon his whole body. "Throw thy holy water upon me. Hark! The spirits are knocking upon the door."

"'Tis some one in the flesh, then," said Nancy. "See who is there," she added to the blackamoor.

Now they could all hear some one knocking upon the great door, and the black man going to open it, came back presently, and there behind him, upon the threshold, was Yellow Eyes, rubbing his hands and leering at them with eyes like molten gold.

"*Diable!*" cried the governor. "'Tis the dumb man. What want you here, rogue? Did I not tell you upon the beach to get thee gone? By the Virgin! How he gibbers! Curses on your impudence, fellow, be off with you before I have my servants throw you out."

Yellow Eyes stood looking from one to the

other, an inarticulate gurgle in his empty throat, his toothless gums opening and shutting spasmodically.

"Canst hear what I say, knave?" shouted the governor.

Yellow Eyes nodded his fleshless skull.

"Then out with it! Out with it, I say! You torture me with my inability to understand what those great eyes of yours are saying; though, by the Holy Virgin! I believe he doth try to speak of the English dogs in the dungeon."

A great wagging of Yellow Eyes' head, his molten eyes turning red with a strange, new light which flamed into them.

"*Sacré!* It is the prisoners. Is that right, rogue?"

Another nod from Yellow Eyes.

"Mother of Mary! What is it, then? Speak, I tell you—speak!" roared the governor in a fair rage by this time.

"*Hein!* He can not speak better for your yells, though you shouted yourself as dumb as he is," broke in the monk. He poured a great

goblet of wine, and drained it, and smacked his lips. "*Mon dieu!* Maybe the fellow can write, if he cannot talk."

"Curse my soul, monk, but thou art the very devil for ideas," cried d'Ogeron. "Canst write, knave?"

Yellow Eyes shook his head that he could not.

"Curse thee for the blockhead that thou art!"

"Let me try him," interrupted the monk, putting down his chicken bones and licking his fingers, while Nancy threw at him a glance of alarm. "It is about the Englishmen you would speak?"

A nod of assent from Yellow Eyes.

"Something the governor wants to know?"

Another nod, more vigorous than the previous one.

"Important?"

Still another nod.

"Ah! We are getting at something. Now, what next?" He wrinkled his forehead and licked his greasy fingers reflectively. "Nice Englishmen?" he queried, while a silly smile

overspread his shiny face at his own question.

"Nice grandmother!" snorted the governor, but Yellow Eyes shaking his head so violently in disapproval of the suggestion that the English prisoners were nice, both d'Ogeron and the monk looked at him in amazement as he leveled his bony finger full at Nancy.

She had been standing at the table, on the side nearest the couch, and d'Ogeron, moving excitedly from her toward Yellow Eyes, she sprang to the wall, seized the musket, and presented it full at the governor's head in such a way that the muzzle commanded Yellow Eyes as well.

"If anybody in this room moves a step without my permission, I will kill him!" she said. "Stir, and I will blow the top of your head off."

Without turning her head to look at him, she addressed the little man in the dirty smock who was standing behind the monk's chair.

"Are you not a Fleming?" she asked in Dutch, for she had lived long in Flanders and spoke that language and Spanish, as well as French and her own tongue.

"Yes," answered the man, his face brightening, but keeping a nervous eye upon d'Ogeron, nevertheless.

"I made sure of it when first I saw you. Can your master speak your language?"

"No."

"Nor the monk?"

"No."

"Is your master kind and good to you?"

The man hesitated, a look of fear in his eyes. "No," he replied faintly.

"Would you escape if chance offered you the opportunity?"

"Ja. With all my heart!"

"And the black man. Is he, too, anxious to regain his liberty?"

"He weeps all day for his wife and baby. He is not happy here."

"Where are they?"

"I do not know. Somewhere on the Gold Coast."

"Can you speak his language, or he yours?"

"I have taught him a few words; he has taught me some of his."

"Tell him from me that if he will do as I

say this night, I will give him his liberty. Aye, if I have to take him back to Africa myself, I will restore him to his wife and baby, if he will but obey me in everything I command."

The little Fleming spoke a few guttural words to the negro, who showed his white teeth in a broad grin and answered him, edging away the while from his master.

"I could not explain all to him," said the Flem; "he said he would follow me in all things. I can trust him."

"Tell him to unbar the great door and whistle thrice."

The Fleming repeated the message.

"He says he cannot whistle. He does not know how to do it; I cannot make him understand."

"Then, do you go. Simply unbar the great door and whistle thrice, as loudly as you can; then leave the door unbarred, and return here."

D'Ogeron's face was purple with rage. Now, as his serving man began creeping towards the door, keeping his back always to the wall, he burst forth in a perfect storm of anger.

"Strike her down, you scullion!" he roared. " 'Tis a woman, fool—a chit of a girl. Throw thyself upon her."

The Fleming stopped irresolute, rooted in his tracks, and gave Nancy a look from his eyes in which she saw fear and doubt.

"Throw thyself upon her, varlet! Do you value your own wretched life above your master's? To-morrow you shall swing for this."

"Do not fear him, my friend," said Nancy, smiling encouragement. "To-morrow we shall be far away from here, and he cannot harm you."

The man moved toward the door. And now he would have to pass Yellow Eyes, who stood nearest to the opening.

"Hear you, dumb man," admonished the girl, "if you seek to hinder him in any way, be assured I shall kill thee if it take the only charge in my musket to do it."

Yellow Eyes did not stir. The Fleming reached the door, darted out and disappeared in the passageway without, and she heard him unbarring the great door, and, immediately

thereafter, the sound of three long whistles came faintly to her ears.

"Strike her down, monk!" cried the governor. "She durst not harm a man of your cloth. Perdition take you! Do something, I say! *Sacré!* Excommunicate her, monk!"

The monk at this, with a wild look about him, slid under the table with an agility that he would not have been given credit for, and presently, everything remaining quiet, his hairy arm appeared above the board, groped around among the dishes, found a bottle which he tightly clutched, and that too disappeared. Whereupon the silence was broken by a gurgling sound, and an instant later by footsteps in the passage.

CHAPTER VIII

A FRIEND TO THE RESCUE

On the beach under the castle on the hill Barney, and the three-legged dog, lay in the soft sand, silence and the night heavy upon them. The sea whispered to his eager soul a lyric song that set his brain throbbing with delight. When he judged that half a glass had run its course, he arose softly to his feet, skirted the crowd of merrymakers, who farther down the beach still kept up their singing and shouting, and began working his way to the foot of the path that led up the side of the mountain.

Under a genipa-tree a sailor lay sleeping, exhausted by his day of debauchery, his head pillowed upon his arm. Barney glanced about him stealthily, and, observing no one near, bent down, and feeling in the mariner's shirt possessed himself of his knife and pistol.

Then he vanished into the shadows at the

foot of the cliff, and began to climb, Three-legs sniffing the ground eagerly. Suddenly the dog whined, and Barney grasped him by the muzzle just in time to choke back a bark.

"What is it, boy?" he whispered. "What's the matter, old fellow?"

He seized the dog's scruff tightly in his hand to keep him from bounding away, and then, looking upward through the trees, saw, in a clearing where a little of the moonlight sifted through the branches, the furtive figure of a man slinking up the stone steps, a grotesque figure with the head and shoulders of a Hercules and the pendulant arms of some monster ape, the sinister figure of Yellow Eyes, the tongueless man, creeping noiselessly, now hidden by the gnarled trunks of palms and cedars, again showing for an instant in the shimmering moonlight, like some uncanny beast in the jungle. Boy and dog followed as closely behind him as Barney dared to go. When they reached the bottom of the ladder, they saw him far above them, and by the time the Irish lad had half-carried the three-legged mastiff up the iron rounds, the dumb man had disap-

he could find, and the man, disappearing and coming back in a moment with an armful of ropes, he and Barney first tied the feet of Yellow Eyes, helpless under the threatening jaws of the mastiff, then tripped him, wound him around with cords, and rolled him into a corner, bleeding from a cut over the ear.

"And now, monsieur," she said, addressing the governor, from whose face she had never once taken her eyes, and stepping closer to him, so that the muzzle of her barrel was but a foot from his heart, "it is your turn."

D'Ogeron gulped down the anger that all but choked him.

"The English prisoners!" he finally managed to gasp out. "So that is your plot—and that is what the dumb man with the yellow eyes would have told me. Fool! Fool that I was! The English prisoners! Well, what if you do relieve them? My cattle-hunters will tear them limb from limb."

"That is as it may be," replied Nancy coolly. "You forget that there is a ship in the harbor, monsieur, and that my countrymen are the

greatest sailors in all the world. And now—the keys.”

“What keys?”

“Those to the dungeon where the prisoners are kept.”

“And what if I refuse?”

“I will kill you, and then batter down the walls.”

“*Mon dieu!* I believe you would. Mademoiselle, I will set the English prisoners free and let them depart in peace for the colony in Jamaica, if you will but remain here with me and be my wife.”

“Time passes swiftly, monsieur—the keys, at once!”

“Then let me pass, mademoiselle; they are in my private apartment.”

“Is that true?” asked Nancy, in Dutch, without looking behind her, never taking her eyes from the governor’s face.

“He wears them in his belt,” replied the Fleming, in French, so that d’Ogeron, favoring him with a particularly vicious look, drew them forth and hurled them to the floor.

"Now, Barney," said the girl softly, in English, "do you slip up behind him and deal him a blow with the butt of thy pistol. It grieves me to have it done, but 'tis the only way, for I fear the consequences did he ever come to close quarters with me."

"Faith! I long for the chance," answered the Irish lad.

He passed softly behind the governor, nonchalantly, as if inspecting the beamed ceiling, and then dealt him a blow behind the ear that stretched him senseless upon the floor.

Then they fell upon him, tying his wrists and feet, and winding him about with ropes, and stuffed a gag in his mouth, and so left him there. Nancy secured the keys, and, guided by the Fleming, they started from the room.

"Hist!" cried Barney, as they reached the door. "We'd better go back—we forgot to gag the dumb man."

"Don't be silly, Barney," laughed the girl, and the Irish boy looking foolish and downcast at this sally, she threw her arms about him impulsively and hugged him. "You are a brave lad, Barney boy," she whispered, "and

from my heart I thank you. But we idle. There is much to be done before the night is over."

And so they rushed out, pell-mell, across the passage, down a flight of stone steps, along another shorter corridor, the negro going ahead with a link-light to show the way. Another flight of stairs led downward, and descending them they came to an iron door set into the solid masonry.

They had barely got this open with one of the keys from the governor's bunch, when the light blew out in the sudden draft which greeted them.

"No time to go back for another light," commanded the girl. "We must go on in the dark."

They felt their way through a chamber so large that Nancy could touch no wall by stretching forth her arms on either side. At the far end they reached still another iron door, with a grating of iron bars in the upper half.

"In there," whispered the Fleming.

Nancy, feeling for the lock, took the key he indicated.

"Holloa!" she called. "Men of England! A friend to the rescue!"

"Bully for you, Devon," answered a man's voice from the darkness. "A Devonshire voice that, and a woman's to boot, or you can keel-haul me."

The man's tones, so rich and deep and vibrant, thrilled her and set her heart to beating as it had never beat before.

"Aye, sir," she answered, "an English girl. Follow me at once—there's no time to be lost."

"Right you are," replied the voice in the dark. "Ho, lads! Tumble up there, my hearties! Here's an English girl come to steer us out of this beastly hole."

She had found the lock now, and, thrusting the key in, threw open the door. As it swung back creaking and grinding on its hinges, she heard the rush of men's feet upon the stone passageway, engulfed in blackness, which yawned mysteriously in front of her.

"Steady, lads!" commanded the vibrant voice again, while Nancy, as the sound of it bathed her soul with a new and strange delight, felt a sense of strength and confidence take

possession of her whole being. "Line up, men, and answer to your names."

The corridor was suddenly full of invisible forms. Then the voice in the dark again—

"Will Johnson?"

"Aye!"

"Trueheart Jackson?"

"Aye, sir!"

"Jim Rimple, are you there?"

"Well, I should kiss a pig!"

"Then stand in the doorway here and tally the men off as they come out, lest one be asleep in the dark and be left behind. Count me as one."

He stepped into the dark chamber beside her, and the girl felt him touch her shoulder, and then grasp her hand silently with a clasp of comradeship, and manliness, and vigor that went straight to her heart.

"Thirty, right—all accounted for, sir," said another voice from the depths of the gloom.

"Very good, Jim Rimple. Now do you take up the end of the line. Forward, men—softly, lads, softly. Lead on, Devonshire girl!"

They felt their way along the corridor, back

over the route by which they had come, Nancy, Barney, the black man and the Fleming going ahead, with Three-legs sniffing along in front, his scruff in the boy's fingers, the Englishmen marching along after in single file. Up the steps, down the long corridor they crept. More steps to be stumbled over, the men admonishing one another to be quiet and making all the more noise for their pains.

In front of the door to the big room Nancy stopped, pushed it open, and stepped quickly within. The link-lights still burned as brightly as before. D'Ogeron lay where she had left him, bound and gagged. He had come to his senses, and glared at her in impotent rage, struggling frantically to free himself. The feet of the monk stuck out from beneath the table on one side, and from the other a long, hairy, red arm and a grimy hand, still clasping a bottle by the neck. His snores, and grunts, and groans, and rumblings filled the chamber like the music of a pipe organ in a cathedral.

But where was Yellow Eyes? Gone! Only a spatter of blood on the floor to show where he had lain, and beside it the ropes from which

he had freed himself. That he had not stopped to liberate the governor she attributed to the fact that he had probably heard them coming just as he had succeeded in working loose. So she concluded he had taken but a short start of them. She sprang back into the corridor, as the head of the line came up.

"Quickly, men!" she shouted. "'Tis life or death now. One has escaped who will spread the alarm."

The monk rolled over at the sound of her voice, and sat up stupidly as she darted from the room. She sped down the corridor which led to the great door, the men swift in her wake, and they were soon in the little clearing on the crest of the mountain. The moon was gone, and where she had ridden a bank of clouds reared their angry thunderheads. The darkness was thick around them.

"Men!" called Nancy. "There's work ahead of you this night. There's a ship in the harbor to be taken. She lies close in, with only half a watch aboard, and they drunk."

"Drunk!" cried a husky voice at her side. "Some men get all the luck in this world."

"Silence, Jim Rimple!" The vibrant voice that Nancy had come to know so well had a ring of command in it, and Jim Rimple subsided with a parting threat to kiss a pig.

"How's the tide?" asked the vibrant voice.

"It should soon turn ebb," she answered, straining her eyes for him in the deep gloom.

"Then we have luck with us—all but Jim Rimple." The men laughed at this sally. "Now then, lads, one foot right after the other now, and don't go to sleep on the path. Lead on, Devon, and we will take a dozen ships, do you but say the word."

"Are any of you armed?" asked the girl.

"All armed," laughed the voice.

"Good!" she cried. "For the island swarms with cattle-hunters and buccaneers. Armed with what?"

"British fists," laughed the voice again, while the men shouted.

"Fists!"

"Aye. Don't you worry about our arms, my girl."

"I have a musket, and thought you would care to take it from me."

"A good idea. Pass it to me, lads."

"And the boy here hath a pistol and a knife."

"Pass 'em along, too, little 'un."

"Faith! that I won't," rebelled Barney.

"Damn my eyes if you get my pistol—but here's the knife." He handed it to the man nearest him.

"All ready, Devon?"

"All ready! And we must go straight over the face of the cliff."

"Why not by the path—we know it well?"

"We want no quarrel, only our freedom. The whole island is gathered at the settlement below, feasting and drinking."

"Feasting"—it was the husky voice again—"and drinking! I say, fellows, we ought to go down and clean up the whole gang of 'em."

"Avast there, Jim Rimple. The maid is right. Over the cliff, lads, and step lively."

So they went scrambling through the undergrowth, clinging to the rocks and roots and branches of trees, and the thick tropical vines which grew in a network over the side of the mountain, Nancy and Barney, with Three-legs between them, helping the crippled dog who

was hard put to find a grip for his toes and whined and moaned continuously.

Every man for himself it was, in that mad tumble through the jungle, until they came out at last upon the hard sand beach at the foot of the precipice, where they counted noses and found they had lost not a man in the descent, mad and reckless as it had been.

Nancy and Barney, undertaking to locate the small boats which had been drawn up on shore, went away now, and in the mouth of a little creek where they had landed from the ship earlier in the day, they found a longboat hauled up, and so, spying out no other, Barney went back for the men and brought them up.

The fires on the beach had burned themselves out, so that they were in little danger of detection as they slunk along, bending low, as far from the water's edge as they could get. Up above them, on the rising grassy ground in the center of the settlement, a huge bonfire was still blazing, and the merry-makers were still at their drinking and carousing, for their songs and laughter floated down to them.

Some of the men were for going up in a

body, in a sudden rush, and squaring accounts with the French buccaneers, but the wiser among them prevailed upon the rash.

Nancy, having located the position of the longboat, ran up to it and had laid hold upon the gunwale when a figure, seated in the shadows of the bow, rose with a scream of surprise.

Nancy jumped back, her heart beating wildly; and then she laughed and sprang forward eagerly. It was Cherie, and with her, as Nancy saw upon a closer look, her new-found husband, Bras-de-Mort, stretched out in the bottom of the boat, his head in her lap.

"Pardon me, my friends," said the girl, smiling. "I did not know I would disturb a courting couple here at such an hour, and right sorry I am to interrupt you. But I needs must have your trysting place."

"Have our trysting place!" cried Bras-de-Mort. "You speak in riddles, mademoiselle."

"Aye, the boat—and urgently do I need it, too."

"For what, mademoiselle? You astound me."

"To sail away in, to be sure. What else should I want with a boat?"

"Sail away in! Why, mademoiselle, the tide has gone out so far now you could not budge it."

"Na'theless, an' it shall be budged, never fear. I have turned loose the English prisoners in the fort—and here they come now." And with this up they came in a rush, Bras-de-Mort leaping to his feet and putting himself upon the defensive.

"Nay, friend, for my sake!" cried Cherie, laying her hand upon her husband's arm. "Desist, I pray you, and make no alarm. The girl hath found means to escape from this frightful place, even as you and I but a moment since were wishing we might do."

"An' that be your wish, 'tis easily enough granted," said Nancy. "For we propose to seize the ship and go away."

The men had hurled themselves upon the longboat by now, lifting it in their strong arms, and they bore it to the water and launched it, Cherie in her amazement remaining still in the

bow. Bras-de-Mort had jumped upon the beach.

Some among the Englishmen knew him, and hailed him, and offered him passage with them did he choose to go, seeing that he was a friend of the English girl.

Then they scrambled into the boat and got out the oars.

"Be quick, my friends," said Nancy. "You have but a moment to make your choice."

"*Sacré bleu!* I am a fatalist," said the Frenchman with a shrug, and waded out to shove off, as there came from the settlement the sound of a shot and the roar of men's voices.

"Yellow Eyes hath found a way to give the alarm," cried Nancy, "or else a spy hath come down to where we are and disclosed our purpose to the rest. Pull, men!"

They bent to the oars, and the longboat shot down the creek on the ebbing tide, Bras-de-Mort in the stern where he had hurled himself at the first alarm. Torches were gleaming now among the palm-trees, and presently a volley of musket balls whistled over their heads. It was lighter over the water, away

from the shadow of the thick tropical forest of the island, so that they had no difficulty in making out the ship's lights. By the time the catle-hunters on shore could load their pieces and fire again, they were under her stern. Dropping noiselessly along the ship's side, they made fast at the beak-head, and so gained the deck over the forecastle.

Nancy, Three-legs in her lap, felt herself lifted in a pair of strong arms, so that she was able to half-push, half-throw the mastiff aboard, and then, clambering up by the mainstay and the foretacks, followed him. The men did not wait to go up by the ladder, but clinging to the scupper-leathers, dragged themselves up in a twinkling.

Two of the watch came running forward, aroused by all the commotion they made, sleepy-eyed and wondering. They went down like ninepins, and rolled into the scuppers.

Nancy, hearing at her side the husky voice which she recognized as Jim Rimple's expressing to himself a doubt as to whether or not he would find a bottle of brandy, turned in time to see him leap forward upon a familiar figure.

It was Pierre, the bushy-bearded Pierre, and although she could not see him very clearly in the darkness, she fancied that his little eyes were blinking and snapping with a rapidity unusual even for him.

She shouted out a warning to him, and Pierre, recognizing her voice and comprehending at last that the ship was taken, scuttled down into the forecastle, and disappeared, like a frightened rat.

Another volley rang out ashore, and they could see the flashes of fire from the muskets. But they were too far off now to worry as to this. He of the vibrant voice hurled a dozen quick commands at the men, who answered him with cheery, "Aye, aye, sir."

"Pass the cable along aft there, boys," he called in the darkness. "Walk it along! Walk it along! Lay aloft aft there, you lubbers. Take the gaskets off those sails and let everything go by the board! How's your wheel there, Mr. Helmsman?"

Nancy and Barney sprang for the wheel and put it hard to port. Her stern came around at this, and the *Baptiste* dropped down the cove

on the ebbing tide. Outside, clear of the land, a flying, light breeze laid her over.

"What's the matter with the old tub?" shouted the voice again. "She's as light as an empty jug."

"All her cargo has been unladed," Nancy called to him.

"I thought so. Boys, look alive now, I say, you've got your work cut out for you this night."

The last man to come aboard, the fellow to whom Barney had passed his knife on the top of the hill, had cut the painter and set the long-boat adrift. A man who had been swimming in their wake as they had rowed out to the ship came up as the barkentine got under way, and, grasping the trailing rope-end, hauled himself aboard. His head showed for an instant against the skyline as he climbed, dripping and bedraggled, over the rail, a pasty-colored, almost fleshless head, like a raw skull, in which two eyes gleamed as brilliantly as burnished gold.

"Look, Barney! See there!" whispered Nancy.

"Faith! Let me go and pitch him overboard," he answered softly, while the hair on Three-legs' neck bristled, as he growled and showed his fangs.

"Let him be, lad," advised the girl. "We shall know how to attend to his case later on. I would not take a human life but to save my own, or my country."

She stayed the Irish boy with a hand upon his sleeve, and Barney, who was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, put his pistol back into his shirt. So Yellow Eyes went in peace, slinking along the deck, and dived into the forward scuttle, and they stood there and let him pass. And neither of them knew what they had done that night.

CHAPTER IX

A BAD NIGHT'S WORK

The clouds which had covered the moon and all the stars, and screened their escape under a mantle of black, now came rolling up out of the northeast more thickly than ever, and with incredible swiftness, hanging so low that they seemed to engulf the whole ship, blotting her out from all the rest of the world. And the wind moaned a mournful croon in the rigging.

The maintopsail was split to ribbons almost before they had it bent, and, wet with the rain which now came down in a solid wall of water, flapped with a deep-toned wail, tugging to get clear of the groaning yard, till finally it was carried away. Above the roar of the squall which seemed at any moment like to send the ship on her beam's end, Nancy could hear the resolute voice of her countryman shouting orders to the men, who obeyed his commands as if they had been accustomed to do it. She

wondered if he was their captain, but of this she could not be sure.

She and Barney clung to the helm, but she felt that their strength was inadequate, and was about to shout for help, when she felt a strong hand close over hers, and heard a voice out of the darkness saying—

“Well done, Devon!”

And then the vaulted dome of night was split from zenith to horizon, and in that vivid instant, when it seemed as if the door of Heaven had been opened wide to show the flaming glories of eternity itself, she saw him as he really was, for the first time, standing there on the gale-swept deck, a big blond giant of a young man, a weather-beaten, storm-soaked Saxon, with a stubby growth of yellow beard and a great shock of tawny hair matted upon his head, and the blue eyes of a Viking. As the thunder fell upon them with a concussion that made the *Baptiste* tremble in every plank, darkness again, darkness so thick it crushed with its tremendous weight.

She felt the light bark stagger beneath her as it was lifted upon the crest of a mighty wave,

and shiver again, and sigh and groan in its extremity as it slanted down into the trough of the boiling sea, rail under water and the decks awash. God's mighty voice spoke again across the world, and a flood of brilliance, brighter than a lifetime of days, deluged them with a celestial radiance. She saw the boy at her side clinging to the helm with all his strength, his freckled face gone pale as death and glistening with the spume, only the red rag of his tongue, curling out of the corner of his hard-set mouth, making him look like his natural self. Beyond him the round-house covered with débris, the canvas struggling to be free, and the men lying out on the yards, and beyond all a waste of frantic water, mountain high, a seething caldron of waves, their tops torn off by the hurricane and flung about as by a giant madman.

The awful grandeur of it brought a gasp to her lips, a cry more of astonishment and wonder than of fear. The *Baptiste* reeled, throwing her off her feet, but she did not fall. A strong arm encircled her waist, and she was in the arms of the man she did not know, lying

against his breast with great content. She felt her cheek, as he bent down to her, touch his own, and suddenly, as another tear of flame shot across the sky, their lips met while they looked into each other's eyes.

How long she lay there upon his brawny chest she did not know, nor did she ever know. Hours—weeks—months! It seemed to Nancy as though she had been there in his arms all her life, forever and ever, when, finally, she pulled herself away from him, all the blood in her body so hot and eager for something new that had come into her life that she dared not look at him again.

Two of the mariners had come to the wheel, and the Devon man, in the voice that thrilled her whenever he spoke, was giving orders as calmly as though he had been a bargeman on the Thames, on a quiet Sunday afternoon..

"Cut all her lee fore-rigging," he roared against the tumult of the storm. "Cut the mainto'mast and mizzen lee-rigging. Now lay to windward. Look lively there, you old standers! Cut all your weather fore-rigging."

The men leaped at his bidding, with their

axes, and with this the foremast went by the board, and took with it the main topmast and mizzen topmast. The wreckage cleared the ship, with a little quick work, and was soon astern. The *Baptiste* righted herself. Much of the canvas on the main and mizzen had blown itself out of the bolt-ropes. The men at the wheel kept her dead before it until they began to cut away, and then they let her come to a couple of points.

With the coming of the first faint streaks of dawn they made their way into the great cabin, and the Devon man, as Nancy called him to herself, went off to search for a ship's biscuit, and came back empty-handed, with a face that was very grave, although he tried to conceal from her the alarm that he felt. The ship was laboring less now, and the fury of the storm abating considerably. The sun came up in an almost cloudless sky, with the bosom of the Caribbean undulating in long, easy swells of turquoise blue.

They dried their clothes by walking on the deck, with Three-legs, who had come up from some retreat in the hold where he had saga-

ciously stowed himself, barking and whining at their side. But especially did he whine, and growl, too, when they walked forward. Then he would scratch grotesquely with his one forepaw at the forward hatch, uttering sharp, excited yelps.

Barney gave Nancy a sidelong glance full of meaning, but the girl placed her finger against her lips and nodded to him to be silent. The hatch had been battened down, and she judged that Yellow Eyes would be safer for a while where he was than on deck.

The ship was a derelict, her masts carried away, with scarce a spar left large enough to rig into a jury mast. Nancy and Barney, with the dog, walked aft through the wreckage with which the decks were strewn, and the girl began to consider the situation in which she found herself. The mission upon which her father and Sidney had sent her was as fresh in her mind as it had been on the night she had quit their lodgings in Lille; and she still hoped, with the buoyancy of youth, that she would be able, somehow, some way, she did not know how, to get to London in time to give, to those

who could use it for the cause, the secret information which she had been charged to impart.

The Devon man and Jim Rimple had gone below. The former now came back to where she and Barney stood, and she saw by the look in his eyes that he was anxious.

"What is it, my friend?" she asked. "I see by your face that you are sorely troubled."

"I may as well tell you," he answered. "For, although I would spare you if I could, God knows 'tis not a thing that can be concealed. We are in a bad way. The old tub has strained her seams, and we are half full of water. That is why we ride more easily now. For another thing, there isn't a mouthful of food aboard. Cleaned out, she is—not a speck of grub. And I warrant you we have made good search. We have come to sea in our coffin, I greatly fear me."

"It cannot be as bad as that." Nancy smiled, and touched him lightly on the arm. "I am sure you will find a way out of our difficulties."

"How?" he asked, shortly.

"Why, we can sail back to Tortuga, if the worst comes to the worst," interjected Barney hopefully. "There's plenty of grub there—roast ox, and everything."

"Sail!" he cried. "What with, lad? Can you hold your 'kerchief to catch a breeze? No, I tell you, here we rot. Forgive me," he added quickly, turning to Nancy. "I do not mean to frighten you, but our condition is indeed desperate. And here come the men! I fear I shall have mutiny on my hands. Have you the pistol, lad? It is all the weapon we have, for the musket has been broken in the descent of the cliff."

Barney, with a sigh and a groan, surrendered the pistol which he took from his shirt; and the Devon man put it into his pocket, an act that did not escape the notice of the men, who now came trooping down, menacingly, to the rail of the quarterdeck, Jim Rimple at their head.

The Devon man let his eye rove over them, saying not a word, at first. Then—

"Well, men?"

"A fine mess you have got us into, me and

my mates, we're thinking, sir," said Rimple, after an awkward pause.

There was a shuffling of uneasy feet and the bobbing of many heads.

"I have got you into?" demanded the Devon man.

"You, and the wench from Devonshire, that is."

"Oh, as to that, I take the blame, if blame there be. But did I drag you out of your prison? Did you not come willingly enough, to take the ship at the risk of your necks, if need be?"

"Well, then, as to that, sir, we would have been glad enough to go under in a free fight—but this is different."

"Different? How different? Can a man die more than once? Come, men, have done with complaints and keep your upper lips stiff. We'll get out of this. Do you fall to now and build up a longboat out of the planks of the ship. I put you on a pint of water a day—'tis all we have in the butts, but enough to last for three days. And in three days much may happen."

The men brightened up a bit at this, and some of them moved off as if to begin the work he had set them to. But Rimple pulled at his forelock and rolled his eyes. Finally he stammered—

“My belly roars for victuals.”

There was a laugh at this, in which Nancy joined. But it was a laugh that died away quickly.

“Well, now, as to that, we’re all in the same boat, so to speak, Jim Rimple, and you are not a whit more hungry than am I, but I hope I know how to tighten my belt a notch or two. It isn’t as if we had been living on the fat of the land for the past God knows how long in d’Ogeron’s cursed dungeon. As for that, Jim Rimple, you have ever bragged what angler thou art. Show some of these men how to rig up a line or two, and perhaps we can have a fish for dinner. But whether we do or not, know ye, men, the first one among you who attempts violence—him will I pistol with my own hand. Now get to work!”

The men turned away at this, sullenly enough, some of them, but presently, what with

the fishing operations that began, or the interest that work arouses in even the most downcast of men, some of the lighter hearted began to whistle, and in ten minutes Jim Rimple himself, his face all sunshine again, was barelegged on the rail, a pipe between his teeth and the end of a line in his hand, the while he sang between puffs:

"I loved a lass, a fair one!
As fair as e'er was seen;
She was indeed a rare one,
Another Sheba's Queen!
But fool as then I was,
I thought she loved me too!
But now, alas, she has left me.
Falero, lero, loo!"

Some among them were carpenters, and soon the saw and the hammer were singing a merry tune which all but drowned out Jim Rimple's ditty. Nancy and Barney leaned over the bulwarks at his side.

"What bait do you use, Master Rimple?" asked the girl, smiling.

"A bit of a crab's claw, miss," replied the sailor, pulling at his forelock and giving her

boys' breeches and loose canvas shirt a side-long glance, as if to say that he didn't know rightly whether she deserved that feminine designation or not, but would follow the captain's example.

The gay apparel in which Mistress Chillingworth had quit Lille, the crimson stockings, the new short coat, brilliant with ribbons, had long since succumbed to hard usage, and she had picked up on shipboard a nondescript outfit, loose, rough cotton, stained and threadbare. The sleeves of her jacket reached but to the elbow. Her limbs were bare to the knee, and her shapely legs and arms were as brown as sun and wind and weather could make them. Her hair was gathered beneath a brimless cap which she had found upon the beach at Tortuga. About her throat was knotted a bit of scarlet silk which set off the rich color of her sunburned face.

"Crab's claw, Master Rimple? Why, 'tis a very proper lure to be sure."

"I wish I had known you had it," cried Barney. "I warrant you no fish would have been smelling at my supper now."

"Never fear, lad—if it had been any good I'd have gulped it myself," said Rimple, wagging his head solemnly. "I'm hungrier than any fish that ever wiggled a tail. It was a dead crab, blown aboard during the storm. I found it yonder in the scuppers, or rather the three-legged dog did. It would have been good enough for him, but I had other plans for that bit of crab. Now if there's a fish in these parts, why, miss, I'll have him."

"I'll warrant you will, Master Rimple. I can see with half an eye that you are a fisherman."

Jim Rimple's rugged, weather-beaten face glowed with the honest pride that appreciated genius ever feels, and he had opened his mouth to acknowledge the compliment when there came a tug at the line, and he stiffened as one transfixed. Into his eyes flamed the light of a passion that is almost holy. Gingerly he began to haul away at the cord, softly, gently, hand over hand. His body trembled with eagerness. Slowly, then, the expression upon his face changed, apprehension, doubt, fear—conviction.

"I had a bite," he said dolefully. "But he got away."

The line sank down into the water again, and he sat once more dejectedly, the personification of sorrow.

"I think," suggested Nancy hopefully, "that maybe you forgot to bless the bait."

"What, miss?"

"Bless the bait."

He rolled his eyes at her and wagged his head.

"Why, to be sure, you must always anoint the bait," explained Nancy. "Don't you know what the saying is:

"Take gum of life, fine beat, and laid in soak
In oil, well drawn from that which kills the oak."

"Never heard tell on it, miss," said Jim Rimple. "But then," he added, "it wouldn't do any good anyhow. I ain't got any gum of life, and, if I had a barrel of it, there ain't any oil aboard but sperm oil, and that wouldn't kill an oak, would it? No, miss, there ain't but one way to catch fish, asking your pardon—get something they like and go where they is."

With this he hauled in his line and moved off to try his luck in some more likely place.

That afternoon Jim Rible worked his way around the ship. He fished from the stern and from the bow, and from the waist, too. He tried all the places and found each more discouraging than the other. Above the noise of the carpenters his plaintive voice arose all day:

“In Summer time, to Medley
My Love and I would go;
The boatman there stood ready
My Love and I to row.
For cream there would be call,
For cakes and for prunes too,
But now, alas, she has left me.
Falero, lero, loo!”

Meanwhile the men, half-mad with thirst and hunger, fell at the task of ship-building with an energy that showed how keenly they realized the position they were in. Under so many hands the longboat grew as by magic. The Devon man himself drew the rude plans of her, and they shaped her out according to his directions. She was forty feet long. One of the spars that had not carried away was fitted

to be her mast, and the sailmakers busied themselves about the sails, the stay-sheet and hal-yard and all the necessary rigging.

The casks containing their small supply of water had been brought up by the captain's orders into the round-house, which he then barricaded. At noon a gill of water was doled out to each man, the captain standing guard over the butts with Barney's pistol in his hand.

There was grumbling, but no man sought to take by force more than his proper share. They went back to their work sullenly, low-spirited, some of them suffering acutely, as their feverish lips and eyes all too plainly showed.

All next day Jim Rimple fished assiduously, successfully evading the duties of ship-building on the plea that he was busily engaged furnishing food for the crew. Contemptuous remarks to the effect that he was as poor a singer as he was an angler failed to disturb the serenity of his soul. At frequent intervals he would burst into song:

"Like doves we would be billing,
And clip and kiss so fast!

Yet she would be unwilling
That I should kiss the last.
They're Judas kisses now!
Since that they proved untrue.
For now, alas, she has left me.
Falero, lero, loo!"

Nancy and Barney worked with the rest, fetching and carrying for the men. And the captain, as she called him, was worth a dozen what with the wisdom of his advice, the brawn of his mighty arms, and the encouragement that he gave to them.

The three of them had drawn away from the others for a spell of rest in the shadow of the round-house, or great cabin, when there was a commotion forward, and Jim Rimple's voice bellowing:

"I've got him! I've got him! He's a whale!" And then, as they started down the deck on the run, "Sail ho!"

"Where away?" shouted the Devon man.

"Dead ahead, sir."

"What do you make her out?"

"Can't say yet, sir."

The men dropped their work, and rushed

pell-mell to the forecastle. Away off to the west, so low down that she could scarcely be seen, they made out the topsails of a ship. But what manner of ship she was none could tell.

The men lined the storm-shattered bulwarks, their eyes alight with eagerness. Jim Rimple's fish, in the excitement, made its escape. He went from group to group, bemoaning his ill luck and describing the size and beauty of the prize which had eluded him at last.

"Now, lads," cried the captain, "don't stand gaping there as if you'd never seen a to'gal-lants'l before. Is this the time to idle, with a fine ship coming up and the longboat not yet ready to go over the side?"

Nancy saw a glance full of meaning pass between the men, but its significance she did not fathom then. The men did, however, and back they went, tumbling aft so eagerly that they fairly fell over each other in their haste; and presently the noisy ship-building chorus rose again, the clang of hammer and anvil. Jim Rimple, the great angler, joined his ship-

mates for the first time that day, and stepped the mast himself, his husky voice rising above the music of tools and timber :

“ ’Twas I that paid for all things,
’Twas others drank the wine!
I cannot, now, recall things;
Live but a fool, to pine.
’Twas I that beat the bush;
The bird to others flew,
For she, alas, hath left me.
Falero, lero, loo!”

There was no grumbling, no lack of energy now. The men worked like demons, as if their lives depended upon their exertions, as, indeed, they knew very well they did. Before the dark night of the tropics suddenly dropped upon them, they had finished her.

She was rough, but the captain, who had superintended the work, was satisfied. Nancy, no mean expert herself, by reason of her long association with ship-builders when she was a child in Plymouth, inspected it with a criticism that won the admiration of the men. She had wanted to tell the captain how she approved of his design and the skilful workmanship, but there was a reserve in his manner towards

her now that made her avoid him. He did not return again to the incident of the night they had left the island, when he had held her in his arms on the storm-swept deck, but she knew that never would she forget his kiss as long as she might live.

To a Puritan girl, reared as she had been, such a caress could mean but one thing. He loved her. Therefore, she would be his wife. She had decided that irrevocably when he had pressed her to his breast against the fury of the hurricane. As for that, she had resolved it in her mind that she should wed him when first she had heard his deep, vibrant voice answering her call in the dungeon of d'Ogeron's castle, before she had seen him, even faintly in the darkness, before she had looked upon his face in the storm in that first flood of radiance from on high.

But while her heart was won, and she made no concealment of it to her conscience, she had determined that she herself would not be lightly taken. All the suppressed romanticism of her nature, the part of her handed down from some ancestor who had played his part upon the



stage before the gloom of Puritanism had engulfed so large a part of England, that had not been crushed out by the strictness of her religious training and the simplicity of her life among the followers of the Protector, was awakening under the magic touch of love.

She was alive, for the first time in her life, her blood ran faster through her veins, her soft eyes had taken on a luster they had not known before. She had become a woman in that one great instant when Heaven itself had been rent in twain by God's thunderbolt to show her the glories of Paradise.

Without deliberately becoming a coquette, for there was something in her soul too simple and sincere for that, she had determined to keep this young sea-captain at his distance until she chose, when he had earned the boon, to take him into her heart. She could not now be sure whether he avoided her, or seemed to avoid her, because she had first shown an indifference to him, or whether it began with him.

Doubt as to this first found lodgment in her mind late in the afternoon, but the excitement incident to the sighting of the ship and the hur-

ried completion of the longboat drove what resentment she might have felt away. She was a girl once more, as eager for the rescue now at hand, as Barney himself.

Barney was one broad grin from ear to ear at the prospect of getting something to eat, for he, like Nancy, made no doubt that in a few hours at most they would be picked up. Cherie and Bras-de-Mort, after the manner of newly married folk, had kept much to themselves all day long. During the storm the little Parisienne had remained terrified in the round-house, where her husband had placed her, and although he had himself rendered his share of service in handling the ship during the frightful gale, or hurricane, through which they had passed, he evidently considered himself above ship-building, or else felt himself incompetent to join in that labor, for he had spent his time at Cherie's side, as attentive as any courtier.

To be sure, he had busied himself with the repair of the musket which Nancy had brought away from the castle, and which had been broken in the confusion of the escape, but while this might not have been considered a full and

generous participation in the general work, under the circumstances, seeing that his efforts were fruitless, and the musket remained as useless when he had expended his energies upon it as it had been before he began his tinkering, the men good-naturedly winked at what in another, with the exception of Jim Rimple, the fisherman, would have been resented as shirking. At the capstan, abaft the mainmast, he made a little awning to protect her from the sun, and here ensconced her upon a chest as if she had been a queen upon her throne. Here he sat by her side, or sprawled lazily at her feet.

Two lovers, thrown together by the hand of fate and set down, man and wife, on the shattered wreckage of a ship that was like to part them as suddenly as they had been made one! Nancy, knowing how much these two derelicts would find to talk about, the questions they would ask as each probed the history of the other, forebore to intrude upon their privacy.

The excitement over the sighting of the strange sail scarcely disturbed them. They

joined the noisy, breathless throng at the rail for a few minutes, and then returned to their bower, arm in arm.

As the sail rose higher and higher above the vast expanse of tumbling sea, the men speculated among themselves as to what she would prove to be. Now and then one of them would leave the busy group gathered around the long-boat and take a squint at her as she came up, which she did slowly enough.

Towards evening, just before night settled down around them, and the brilliant tropic stars were lighted in the casements of Heaven, Bras-de-Mort, tearing himself away from his bride for a moment, joined the exhausted men, now laying down their tools, and waving his arm off towards where the last faint beams of the sinking sun had shown the stranger to be, shook his head dubiously.

"We shall miss her, after all, monsieurs," said he.

"Why, how now, Master Bras-de-Mort?" asked the captain.

"She's ca'med off, sir," interjected Jim Rimple.

Bras-de-Mort shrugged his shoulders by way of assent.

"And by morning, when it freshens, she'll like as not be off upon another tack, and then, adieu!" he finished.

"Right you are!" cried the captain. "Men, we must put some oars into the longboat. If the ship can't come to us, we must go to her. Fall too, you sea dogs, and turn us out some oars. But first, we'll have another pull at the water butts."

He doled out a dish of water to every man, and they drank their scanty portions and eyed the casks from which it came. But the captain stood guard over them, and cursing their luck they went back to the new task he had laid out for them.

The brilliant equatorial moon gave them all the light they needed, and the heat was less intense now, so that they managed well enough. At the completion of the work he told off the watch, and the rest threw themselves exhausted to the deck, and were soon snoring. Nancy lay down, but, although she was tired and real-

ized for the first time how much she had been through during the preceding forty-eight hours, she found it impossible to sleep. Her head pillowed upon the broad back of Three-legs, she lay there gazing upward at the stars—and dreaming, wide-eyed, such dreams as young girls dream.

Not for a long time did she float off in the land of real dreams; but she slept at last, and the dreams continued, and he came to her, down the path through the meadow back home in Devon, the meadow that ran down to the sea, along the road where the sailors passed on their way to the ships, with their bundles on their backs. And he took her by the arm, gently, and said in a whisper—

“Follow me.”

So she got up quickly, rubbing her eyes then, for they were heavy with sleep, and followed him, down the deck to the waist of the ship, where the men were gathered about the long-boat. It was midnight. The sea lay as calm as the air above it, and a great silence that was almost uncanny brooded over them, a silence

so deep and solemn and mysterious, that the men seemed afraid to break it, and talked in whispers among themselves.

"Now, lads," said the captain, "we're down to the last cask of water. There's to be a swig for every soul, and the balance goes with me aft in the boat here, to stand us against the time we shall need it more, if we should miss the Don in the dark."

There was a shuffling of feet and a grumble or two. Then the water was passed out, to each man a dishful, barely enough to wet their dusty palates.

"I could drink," said Jim Rimple huskily, "I could drink a bar'l o' it. Yea, mates, I could drink all the water that there's in this here barkentine down below, if 'twas fresh, mind ye. I could drink, I could drink, right now, if I had the chance, I say, I could drink all the water that there's in the Thames at Lambeth."

"If thou didst work thy tongue less, thou wouldst not be so dry, Jim Rimple," interrupted the Captain. "Lay ahold of the boat now, lads, and walk her down. Bear a hand with

the axe there, Jim Rimple, and cut away. All together now, lads. Walk her along!"

They eased the longboat to the bulwarks, and, cutting a great hole there, launched her, so that she slid with scarcely a ripple into the sea. The men armed themselves with capstan bars and axes, there being no other weapons aboard the *Baptiste* save the cannon, and tumbled into the longboat.

Nancy, with the French girl Cherie, and Three-legs, stowed themselves away in the stern with Barney aft, near them, at one of the oars, which he insisted upon manning. The captain shoved off, and the longboat had black water between her and the bark, when Nancy started up with a shrill cry:

"Put back! Put back, men," she called. "There's a poor devil in the forecastle."

They looked at her as if they thought she had become suddenly bereft of her wits.

"How now, Nancy?" asked the captain. "I know of nobody else aboard. We are all here, are we not, men?"

"Aye, all here, sir," called Jim Rimple out of the darkness forward.

The captain looked at Nancy inquiringly.

It was the first time he had spoken her name, and the sound of it in his deep voice made the girl catch her breath, so that she was too startled to answer him, but sat there, gazing into his face. Then she shouted—

“Put back, men, he’s in the forward hold, I tell you.”

“Who, in God’s name?” cried the captain, starting up.

“The dumb man.”

“The dumb man? Art ill, child? I know no dumb man—nor is there one among us.”

“Aye, the dumb man, I tell you. The man with the yellow eyes.”

“Faith! I forgot all about him,” yelled Barney, jumping up in his excitement.

“The man with the yellow eyes,” cried the captain at this, more perplexed than ever. “What means this gibberish? You make my head to swim withal.”

“Thou wilt not fail to go back, I know,” pleaded Nancy, putting her hand appealingly upon his arm. “The dumb man is in the forward scuttle. I myself saw him hide himself

there when he came aboard, I and the boy Barney here. Is it not so, lad?"

"Aye, we saw him duck into the scuttle plainly enough—curse his soul!" replied Barney.

"And then when the storm broke, the scuttle-hatch was battened down," Nancy went on. "And so he has been in the hold all this time. And what with the frightful heat and lack of water I fear me he hath perished."

"Aye, like enough he hath perished, whoever he may be, but, by St. Bride of Douglas! who was the fellow? I saw him not, nor even dreamed such a one was aboard."

"True, I had forgotten," answered Nancy. "You saw him not. He is the dumb man—the man with the yellow eyes. 'Tis all I know of him, save that 'twas he who escaped from d'Ogeron's castle, where I had him securely bound with cords, and gave the alarm to the buccaneers."

"Split my wizen!" cried out Jim Rimple at hearing this. "Then let him rot there. What, men?"

"How now, Jim Rimple," said the captain

quietly, but with a deeper vibration in his voice. "When did you take command of this craft?"

But there was an answering roar of approval from the men, and it was not approval of what the captain had said, but of Jim Rimple's verdict, so that Nancy, fearing that they would carry the day, sprang up and appealed to them to go back.

"Faith!" said Barney, breaking in impetuously at this juncture, when the men seemed inclined to listen to the girl. "Much you should concern yourself with this dog of a dumb man, seeing what he hath done to us."

"Why, and what's that, lad?" asked the captain.

"He kidnaped us, for one thing," replied the Irish lad bitterly.

"Kidnaped thee? Where?"

"Somewhere outside of Lille, in France. 'Twas thus we came here."

A roar from the men, and there was the sound of oars striking the water.

"Nay, hold, I pray you!" There was winning appeal in Nancy's voice. "I feel a pity for the fellow, vile as he is. I wouldst have

thee go back and fetch him aboard. I cannot bear the thought of leaving him there to die like a trapped rat."

"And he tried to kill her, too!" Barney was full of animosity; besides, the sound of his voice was pleasant in his ears. "Aye," he went on, "he tried to kill her on the old *Baptiste*."

"Then may God have mercy on his soul," said Jim Rible in a deep rumble, "for there he stays till his bones rot, eh, mates?"

"Aye, Jim Rible, there he stays, right enough. Thou didst speak truly then—as truly as any fisherman can."

There was a laugh all around at this sally.

"Let him rest where he is, mademoiselle," whispered Barney.

"Nay, I will save him with God's help," she answered. "Now, men, wilt go back for me?"

"Well, miss," answered Jim Rible, "we'd do most anything for you that you asked us to do, except this. Here's a man we're devilish well rid of. First, he kidnaps you, then he fights you, then he betrays you—and us. If we had him here right now, we'd cut his

throat and throw him in the pickle, eh, mates?"

"That we would, Jim Rimple!" roared the men heartily. "That we would. In the pickle with the fishes that you didn't catch."

The captain had kept silent, for he was in no mood to waste precious time in the rescue of a fellow so worthless as the dumb man, by all accounts, appeared to be. Now Nancy, seeing that she could expect no aid from him, sprang quickly to the gunwale and poised there.

"Go back, or I shall throw myself into the sea!" said she.

One of the seamen left his place and started towards her in the darkness, but she saw him coming.

"Nay," she said, "come no nearer. If you do, I will hurl myself overboard. Wilt go back, men?"

"Aye, we'll go back, Devon," said the captain, and gave the order.

The men pulled back to the black hulk of the *Baptiste*. Half a dozen then went aboard. Nancy, following them, waited anxiously while they pried off the forward scuttle-hatch, and Pierre, the Frenchman, thrusting his head into

the narrow opening, just large enough to admit the body of one man, called out:

"*Hein!* You there with the yellow eyes. Why are you loafing below when honest men are at work?"

But there was no answer.

"Dumb men can't hear, can they?" asked Pierre, when he had called again and again with the same result.

"Aye, they can hear well enough," answered Nancy. "Leastways, this fellow can. He is not dumb from birth, but hath had his tongue cut out."

"A galley-bird, like enough," said Jim Rimple. "Well, what to do now. We can't wait here all night. I think I'm getting ready to feel a breeze now, and if that ship gets away from us"—he wagged his head at Nancy as if to say that further words absolutely failed him—"I'm for shoving off. We've given him a chance. What more could he ask?"

"Let me look for him," replied Nancy, and lowered herself through the scuttle.

If it had been dark on deck, the blackness was impenetrable in the hole in which she now

found herself. The water in the hold was not so deep here as she had seen it aft that day, but it was above her waist as she felt her way slowly forward, searching for the man she knew was there somewhere, but whether dead or alive she could not tell.

At last she found him, when she had all but abandoned the hope of doing so. He had crawled upon one of the timbers fastened into one of the carling knees, and must have fainted there from heat and thirst, and was still unconscious, for Nancy could detect no sign of life in him. She reproached herself for having let that time of storm and stress, and that something new that had come into her life to make her a dreamer, drive him from her memory.

She pushed his great bulk into the water, and, towing him back to the hatchway, called up. Presently the men brought a tackle and hauled him out and laid him upon the deck.

Jim Rimple, thereupon, ran off as fast as he could go, and returning to the longboat and stating the case to the captain, came back in no great time with a bowl of water which he

poured into the empty, tongueless gullet of the dumb man. This and the night air revived him.

His eyelids fluttered, and presently they opened, and those strange and awful yellow eyes were staring up at them. And so they bore him back into the longboat and laid him down. The men taking their places once more, they shoved off, and the *Baptiste* was left to herself.

No bodings of ill came to haunt the girl. Her mind was at rest; but the simpler nature of the boy was stirred. He came to her, when he gave over his oar after a while to one of the men, and bending down so that none might hear, he said—

“We have done a bad night’s work, *mademoiselle*.”

That was all. But the words found lodgment in her soul, and she could not rid herself of them.

CHAPTER X

ST. GEORGE FOR ENGLAND

The men bent to their oars and pulled in silence, with a long, easy, stroke. The captain at the helm held the longboat on a course that should fetch her up with the ship, if the air did not freshen too soon; for the dead, flat calm had lasted since sundown, and the vessel could not have sailed much beyond the place where they had last seen her topsails in the engulfing darkness. The men rowed steadily, and what with the mystery of the night and their exhaustion, and the torturing thirst in their throats, were in no mood for talk. They were as still as the dumb man who lay gasping in the bottom of the boat at Nancy's feet, his yellow eyes staring up at the sky.

The first faint ribbons of dawn fluttered above the eastern rim of the sea and the timid stars slipping away, a deeper darkness than that of midnight thickened around them for a

while, until, of a sudden, the lordly sun was among them, and it was day. Out of the fleeting mists to starboard emerged the ship, with the sails already unfurling upon her spars.

"Sail ho!" softly called Pierre, the lookout in the bow, but all had seen her.

As they looked, there came a ripple across the placid waters. The sails filled now, catching the first faint breath of the morning, and the Spanish Ancient fluttered in the breeze. Her canvas bellied and she was off upon her course.

"I knew she was a Don," chuckled Jim Rimple, and lay back upon his oar. "Ho! Master Bras-de-Mort, you were too proud to drive a nail into the pinnace; perhaps there's other work more suited to your taste."

"Try me and see," replied the Frenchman.

"And quickly, too," said Jim Rimple. "There's a bit of sport to be done here, I'm thinking."

"Aye!" chorused the men under their breath.

A flaw striking them then, Captain Stillingfleet hauled the sail up, and they went about ship. They got the wind of the Spaniard, bore

down upon her on the quarter, and so came upon her out of the vapor that hung above the sea, before she could get under way upon the other tack.

Before the alarm was given, and the Spaniard's crew came tumbling up, the longboat drifted down her side and grated along her chains. Twenty of the men, with Jim Rimple and Pierre and Bras-de-Mort at their head, were in her shrouds in a twinkling, and over her forecastle, upon the deck, where they met the bewildered Dons with their stout staves and axes, laying about with them furiously. A fusillade of shots was poured into them, and some of the English went down, but by now the rest had clambered over the side, and, gaining the deck, came to close quarters.

They fought desperately with their capstan bars and pikes, and a cutlass or two that had been dropped by the wounded Spaniards, but the musket fire told upon them, and they were being driven back when Nancy, who had been among the last to leave the longboat, burdened as she was with Three-legs, finally gained the deck. Covered with blood which streamed

from their wounds, gasping and panting, the fierce light of battle raging in their feverish eyes, the English retreated step by step.

The Spanish captain, who had been asleep in his cabin, came up now in all his armor, and taking in the situation, he cried—

“Death to the English dogs!”

He drew his rapier and the sun sparkled and flashed upon it. There surged, then, into Nancy’s memory the stories of her childhood. Her father and all her kinsmen had fought the Spaniards at home and in the Low Countries, and so there flamed now in her dark blue eyes a light that Algernon Sidney would have loved to behold.

“Ho, men, ’tis sink or swim now, my brave comrades!” she suddenly cried out in a loud voice. And, leaning over the side of the ship, cut with an axe the painter which held the longboat at the bow, and set it adrift, and then called out again, “St. George for England!” The English, seeing their boat far astern and knowing that there was now but one thing to do, did it so lustily, and with such fresh energy, that they drove the Spaniards back,

and forcing most of them below, begging for quarter, the ship presently struck.

The captain, the Devon captain, that is, for so she called him, took the quarterdeck, and mustering enough men to man the ship, sent Pierre to the helm. Gathering way, they were off before a freshening wind, in possession of as fine a West-Indiaman of 170 tons and fourteen guns as would gladden the hearts of any shipwrecked mariners.

The men waited but to seize all the weapons they could lay their hands upon, as well muskets and pistols as cutlasses, when they made a rush for the great cabin and the bread-room, and threw themselves like ravenous beasts upon all the food and water they could find, so that they were like to gorge themselves to their death, seeing that they would heed none of the remonstrances of the captain. They broke open the hold, too, and, bringing out some casks, staved in the heads.

"Victuals and drink!" cried Jim Rimple, leaping about the deck in a frenzy of joy and excitement, a gobbet of meat in one hand and a pewter mug of wine in the other, "Victuals

and drink!" He rolled his eyes at Nancy. His weather-beaten face, seamed with a thousand wrinkles, was redder than any sun had been able to bake it. "Ah! my lady, victuals and drink are the best things in all the world. Yet I like not these sweet Spanish wines—would rather have a pottle of good old English ale. Aye, that's a drink for ye!"

"Have a care, Jim Rimple," admonished Nancy. "One should be prudent after a long fast."

But she might as well have talked to the mainmast, for all the effect her advice had. Now that the ship was theirs, and they had food and drink in abundance, the men were not disposed to take orders from anybody, save those that were required for their own safety and the navigation of the ship.

Observing that Cherie and Bras-de-Mort were as gluttonous as any, and that Barney was making up for lost time with a rapacity that threatened to burst him, Nancy turned her attention to them, to such good effect that they, and a few of the men, more prudent than the rest, were finally wise enough to heed her

warnings. The soundness of her advice was apparent in no very great time, when so many of the men were taken ill that had another fret of wind come upon them the ship must have been lost for lack of hands to trim her sails; while the Spaniards might have retaken her but for the precaution that was taken of battenning down the hatches upon them.

Nancy ate but a scanty breakfast, and then, returning to the deck, drew the Irish lad to one side, for the question of her own fortunes, and with them those of her friends in England, was still uppermost in her mind, and she wished to talk with the boy about her plans.

"Hark thee, Barney," she said, when they were well alone. "Thou hast been a faithful friend since the night we first met in the market square at Lille. Now, here we are, lad, our lives saved for the present, to be sure, and God be praised for that, but on a course that will never fetch us to England, I fear. What do you counsel, lad?"

"Counsel?"

"Aye—what to do next, lad. Here we are

in the Spanish Indies. Well, we can't stay here, can we?"

"Why not?" demanded Barney.

"I have business in London—urgent business, that has been delayed already, I fear, far too long."

"Then in that case I would give it over," answered the Irish lad, his eyes sparkling.

"Give it over? Ah, that I cannot do."

"We have a fine ship," protested Barney. "Faith, mademoiselle, what more could a body want—plenty to eat and to drink, and the whole wide world ahead of us. I want to see something, I do."

"Ah, Barney," she smiled, "thou hast been a very man, indeed, but I fear thou art a child at heart. Life is made up of far more serious things than thou wot of."

"Mutiny, for one thing!"

Nancy wheeled at the sound of that voice—his voice—and he was standing there, looking at her quizzically, his blue eyes smiling, yet troubled, too.

"Mutiny?" she demanded.

"Aye, mutiny! The men are rapidly getting out of hand. To hear them talk, one would never imagine that they were lately in a dungeon cell, with ropes around their necks, and the hulks staring them in the face. They will have this and they must have that. They can't make up their minds as to anything, and they won't let anybody else do it for them—the beggars!"

"I thought you were the captain," she answered. "They have obeyed you hitherto."

"When it suited them, and then only because they are lost without me. As good sea dogs they are as ever sailed out of Plymouth, but there isn't a navigator among them. I have them there!"

"Thou shouldst have no trouble in coming to terms then, methinks."

"Aye, if they didst but know it. They are such fools, they have not learned yet that not a man among them can take an observation or lay off a course."

"Where would you take them, sir?"

"To England."

"To England!" Surprise and delight

mingled in the look that Nancy gave him then. Her eyes danced with joy. "'Tis where I, too, would go."

"By St. Bride of Douglas! I cannot bend them to my will, what with the Spanish crew between decks that we must have an eye to. They will have naught of England, nor can I prevail upon them to make for Port Royal, where I could find a ship for home."

"Will not go?"

"Nay. Nor do I blame them, seeing that their lives and liberty are at stake."

"Their lives and liberty? But Port Royal is an English city, and Jamaica an English colony, thanks to Cromwell, and whatever England takes she never relinquishes. I had not heard we had lost this place."

"Aye, 'tis English, well enough," he smiled, "but the men would rather see the devil himself just now than Governor Modyford." He made a motion as if to place a noose about his neck. "A dozen of them would be hanged," he finished shortly, "and another dozen sold as indentured servants for the debt they have taken leg bail for."

"And thyself, sir?" she asked, and then lowered her eyes, for she had not meant the question as he had taken it.

"I am on his Majesty's service," he answered, his face flushing.

"Forgive me. I did not intend—"

"Nay, I am as ragged and unkempt as these other tatterdemalions. Your thought but does justice to your intelligence."

"A queer place for the king to have business, methinks," said Nancy, looking at him with eyes full of innocent wonder.

"Aye," he answered, staring at the tumbling sea and the distant horizon. "Such a series of mishaps have brought me thither I could not tell you of them in a month," and he shook his great Saxon head like an angry bull.

"Mishaps," ventured Nancy, thinking of her own misfortunes, "seem to be the fashion. I should be in London this very moment. Long since now should I have been there."

"And I, also, yet here I am, a derelict, adrift with a gang of cutthroats—and a very charming woman—" this last with a glance that made her lower her eyes—"and bound I know

not whither, but certainly not towards England."

"Must you go thither?" she asked, trying to keep from her voice the anxiety that she felt in waiting for his answer.

"'Tis vital that I should," he said. "Else I shall be ruined, for others whom I cannot name depend upon me."

"And I—" Nancy began eagerly, then checked the words she had upon her tongue.

"My ship for Dover was wrecked in the Channel," he went on, "and I was picked up by one of the fishing fleet for Newfoundland, nor could I induce them, for what store of gold I had by me, to put back, and since I could not disclose my identity to them, perforce I had to go whither they wished. Head winds and storms drove us far out of our course, and running short of provisions, the sloop I was aboard tried for the colony in the Virginias, but being buffeted farther south, we finally made a landfall in the Summer Isles, where I took passage on a vessel for Port Royal."

"You have had adventures, sir," she smiled. "I love them, too."



"Call them that, an' you wish," he replied bitterly. "For myself, I crave no others now."

"From Port Royal one might hope to sail for England, I should think," said Nancy, after a pause, her words almost a question.

"Aye, but we never reached there, for falling in with the Dons, I was taken to Domingo, but escaped, and finding my way with a party of cattle-hunters to Tortuga, reached there just as d'Ogeron was cleaning up the island of all Englishmen, that he might undisturbed make a French colony of the place, and so was clapped into his bloody fort along with the rest of these old standers. And there we rotted until you came in the night to show us the way to liberty. Odsfish! Fate hath a pranky way with her, sometimes. What with rage and mortification I could tear out my hair by the roots!"

"His Majesty's business, methinks, rests more seriously upon his courtiers than upon himself," said Nancy.

"He trusted me," replied the Devon man, simply. "He is the king."

She shrugged her shoulders defiantly.

"Nay," he answered, "'tis no ordinary matter. His Majesty's crown, aye, his very life, may be depending even now upon me in these days of cursed Puritan conspiracies. Paris is a hotbed of treason in these troubled times, such as thou couldst not even dream of."

"Treason?" she repeated, her wide blue eyes full of innocence again.

"Aye, black treason. Sidney is there, the arch conspirator, and Colonel Chillingworth, a very dog for plots. 'Twas on that business I was sent to Paris, and when I had secured the evidence I started back and—"

"Evidence!" cried Nancy, for a moment off her guard. "Ah, Master Courtier, how brave you are, and smart."

"Aye," he said, hugely pleased with himself and with her, "I had them all in one net, and might have sent them to the block. But I speak too freely to a stranger, though that thou art a Devon maid did make me loosen my tongue."

Nancy leaned over the rail, her face turned from him lest he see in it something of the deep concern his words had caused her.

"We have been thrown together strangely," he continued, after a pause, taking her small hand in his, "yet such has been the turmoil in our lives since we have met, I have not learned your name, save that the Irish lad calls thee Mistress Nancy—a pretty name, and one I love."

She drew away from him, blushes staining her cheeks, but he held her hand, nor did she try to take it from him.

"I am of the Devonshire Stillingfleets; Godfrey, by name, of his Majesty's Royal Navy, at your service, ma'am," he said.

"The name is not new to me, sir," replied Nancy. "I know it well as an honorable one in my country, that has long been associated with our exploits on the sea."

"My grandfather sailed with Hawkins, and was with Drake at Nombre de Dios. I have used the sea all my life. And you—Nancy? The boy said that you had been kidnaped in France. How came a gentlewoman here, and what, may I ask, is your name?"

"You speak of me as a gentlewoman," she answered, averting her eyes once more, "yet

you found me in company to make you think naught but ill of me."

"Nay," he answered. "You wear your credentials upon your face and in your eyes, which do not lie."

Whereupon, for some strange reason, Nancy found she could not look at him, and so gazed off to sea with eyes that were blurred.

"My name—I cannot tell you, sir," she answered, after a pause, when he had taken her other hand. "Call me 'Nancy.' 'Tis all I can give you now, and I beg of you do not press me further."

He bowed.

"And now," she went on briskly, stopping to pull the ears of Three-legs who came up and threw himself at her feet, "what say the men? They will not listen to your desires to return to England. Peradventure they have something to suggest."

"Aye, that they have," he answered, bringing his fist down upon the rail. "They propose to go where they list to seek purchase."

"Purchase!"

"They needs must have more gold, and so

would gain further booty from the Spaniards in these seas."

"What!" she cried. "Would they then turn pirate?"

"Turn pirate," said he at this, looking at her wonderingly. "My God, madame, they *are* pirates!"

CHAPTER XI

THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND CROWNS

Young Barney McGiggen, his red rag of a tongue curling from the corners of his delighted mouth, and his countless freckles sparkling in the tropical sunlight like so many specks of gold, had leaned over the rail close by them, absorbed apparently in a school of flying-fish, disporting themselves in the waves. But his ears had drunk in all that had been said.

"Faith, then, mademoiselle!" he cried, his freckles vanishing for an instant as his grin deepened. "If we are pirates, praise God, we have lost the best one among us, for never did I see a man more fitted for the trade than Yellow Eyes."

"Lost him?" demanded Nancy, wonderingly. "What mean you, lad?"

"Nothing, save that we shall never see him again. He's gone!"

"Gone?"

"Faith, and he was after being in the long-boat when you cut her adrift."

"And good riddance, too, I say, if this be true," interrupted Captain Stillingfleet.

"'Tis true enough," moaned Nancy. "I recall it all. I was the last one over the side just now when we took the ship. The dumb man was lying there in the bottom of the longboat, too weak to move, unable to cry out, and in the excitement of the fight I gave him not a thought." Tears sprang to her eyes. "He will die, I know, of hunger and thirst, for he was all but dead when I hauled him out of the hold of the *Baptiste*."

She ran to the stern and scanned the sea, then climbed into the shrouds that she might have a wider view. Seeing all around her naught save the boundless waste of water, she called aloft to the lookout, but the sailor replied that no sign of the longboat could he see.

"We must go back, Captain Stillingfleet," said she, coming down from the rigging and joining him upon the quarterdeck. "I cannot abandon the wretch to so horrible a fate."

"Odsfish! what is it to you?" he answered. "The fellow hath been but a menace to you since first he kidnaped you in France and brought you thither. We are all well rid of him. Never, I think, did I see so repulsive a human. He had the eye of a devil, if ever I saw one."

"What you say may be true, and I have no cause to feel pity for him, but he is one of God's creatures and I cannot abide the thought of leaving him alone in all this desert with neither food nor drink."

"There was some water left in the cask," replied Captain Stillingfleet indifferently, "enough, mayhap, to last him a day or two. But I do believe he is dead by now. In all events it would be a hopeless task to search for him, for we have taken no observation since we seized the ship, and know not where we are, nor whence we came, nor how the currents set in these parts, nor anything soever, save that we have sailed before the wind. To look for him would be a waste of time."

"But you will bring the ship about and try," she pleaded, laying her hand upon his arm.

"I could not, if I would. The men, with half of them lying in the scuppers from their gluttony, would refuse me even if they were able to, and I would but force an issue that I would defer until a more favorable time. So you must give it over."

"Faith, he'll turn up again, mademoiselle," said Barney, wagging his head knowingly. "That fellow was never born to die—he was born to get killed."

Whereupon, Captain Stillingfleet, with a great laugh, clapped him so heartily upon the back that Barney was lifted from his feet and went off rubbing his shoulder.

"And now," added the Devon man to Nancy, "I have sent for the Spanish captain, and, if you like, you may remain here by me and speak with him."

The Spaniard emerged at that moment from his cabin where he had retired when the ship had struck, and with him was a girl about her own age who was the most beautiful woman, Nancy thought, that she had ever seen, a dark, tigress-eyed creature, with hair like the mantle

of midnight, and the pale olive complexion of her race.

"My apologies to you, señor, for the inconveniences we have put you to," smiled Stillingfleet, with the easy grace of a courtier; but, although he addressed himself to the Spanish captain, Nancy observed that he had eyes only for the daughter, and a new emotion surged within her bosom.

"Nay," the Spaniard answered with a bow, "'tis the fortune of war, and I cannot complain. I would have the honor of presenting you to my daughter, Yvonne, did I but know your name."

"I am Captain Stillingfleet," said Godfrey, "of the Royal Navy of England, and at your service, señor."

The Spaniard looked at Nancy, meaningly, at her bare limbs, her coarse shirt and breeches, at the mop of tangled hair crowded into her cap, and there was a question in his eyes, although he did not speak. His daughter, surveying her from unkempt crown to bare toes, her own lips and nostrils curling into a con-

temptuous smile, turned her back, while the hot blood mounted to the English girl's cheeks.

"My name," said Nancy, quivering at the insult that was more full of meaning than any mere words might have expressed, "can matter little to you. Therefore, I forbear to mention it."

The Spaniard flushed, and would have spoken had not Captain Stillingfleet interposed.

"Nay," he said, looking at his countrywoman, "one should be given courtesy when one's ship hath been seized from under him." Whereat Nancy bit her lip in vexation at the position in which she found herself, and, repenting as quickly as she had offended, she had an apology on her tongue when the Spanish girl, with a languishing glance at Captain Stillingfleet, shrugged her shoulders with a gesture more eloquent than language.

"'One's ship,' indeed," flared up Nancy at this, stung again to the quick. "Since when have Spaniards sailed in English ships and called them theirs?"

"English ships!" exclaimed Captain Stillingfleet.

"Aye, this is an English ship."

"That cannot be."

"Is it not so, Señor Captain?" she demanded, wheeling upon him. "Then how came you by it? What did you with the English crew who manned her? Peradventure they are starving their lives out in the galleys, or rotting in the dungeon beneath the sea at San Juan d'Ulloa, where that brave Plymouth man, John Hawkins, did have a taste of your treachery, as every one in Devon knows. And you, Captain Stillingfleet, prate of seizing a ship! We have but taken for England what is rightfully England's."

"Not so fast, Mistress Nancy," broke in the Devon man at this, while some of the mariners lurched down to the rail of the quarterdeck at hearing the girl's voice rise with excitement. "It cannot be an English ship—'tis not rigged as one."

"English she is, I tell you," she cried. "I have seen too many of them laid down not to know. Jim Rimple!" she called, and Jim, the angler, stepped out of the little knot of men gathered at the rail. "Say truly, Jim Rimple,

whether this be an English ship or no."

Jim Rimple pulled his forelock, and rolling his eyes at her said—

"Aye, miss, 'tis an English ship."

"What did I tell you?" cried the girl triumphantly. "I knew her for an English ship the minute I set my eyes upon her."

"English she be, miss, from main to keel," confirmed Jim Rimple again, putting an almost incredible amount of deep-toned conviction into his husky voice, "and built by the Petts at Woolwich—or I'll kiss a pig. Her rigging's Spanish and her tackling, too, and her boulders are new, but her hull's British. The *Madre de Dios*, they call her now, miss, but she's the old *Snapdragon*, or I will kiss a—"

"How, now, Señor Captain," said Nancy with a sparkle in her eyes, "we have but taken what is our own, here."

"Hurrah!" shouted the men. "That's the talk, Devon."

The Spanish girl's lips curved again, delicately and disdainfully, and Nancy felt herself grow feverish once more.

"If this be a lawful prize of war, methinks the cargo, too, is fair booty. Let's have a look at her papers, men."

The sailors gave a hearty British cheer, and jumped and capered about the deck with glee, and exchanged meaning glances among themselves, as if to say that things were going to suit them very well indeed, and just as they had planned they should. Captain Stillingfleet looked thunder-clouds, but the Spanish captain merely smiled, with no trace of annoyance upon his patrician face.

"Nevertheless, and you take the ship, save that you cast her away, it will be restored to me in good time," said he, "under the law, as you shall find out."

"There is no law below the tropic, nor has been since Elizabeth's time," replied Nancy. "Nor is there any law that says that Englishmen may not take back an English ship wherever they find it."

"England and Spain are now at peace," said Captain Stillingfleet, "and the señor speaks truly."

And then, in an evil moment, he looked at the Spanish girl again, and she, smiling at him in all her loveliness, the frown vanished from his face. He smiled back at her and thus settled his fate.

For a high resolve had been running in Nancy's mind, no less a purpose than to save her friends and kinsmen, hiding in France until the Stuarts might be overthrown again, from the treachery of this Cavalier royalist, a resolve to keep him from going back to England, at all costs, at whatever sacrifice, until time should frustrate his schemes. And then that smile! It decided her.

"I would have a word with you in private," said Godfrey Stillingfleet, drawing her aside; and when they had walked to a little distance from the rest he added, in a low tone, so that the Spaniards might not hear: "What folly is this that prompts you to the undoing of both of us?"

"I shall hold the ship, come what may," Nancy replied, looking straight into his wondering eyes.

"Do you not see that by joining with me we

can both go back to England? A little patience and skill will fetch to both of us our heart's desire."

"There is time enough for going back to England, and much that waits us here in these far seas."

"There is not time for me," he cried, stamping his foot, "nor for the king. One might think you a Puritan, a Conventicler."

"One *might* think anything," replied Nancy. "I, for one, think of going adventuring."

"These men are pirates, I tell you," cried Captain Stillingfleet, in vexation.

"Since that then is the case," said Nancy, "I must needs turn pirate with them. Let us have a peek at the papers, men," she called.

"Aye," roared the men, "let us see what sort of a prize we have here," and they went tumbling aft, with Nancy at their heels.

They broke open the supercargo's cabin, and getting out the ship's papers spread them upon the table in the great cabin and pored over them with exclamations of delight, Nancy spelling out the items amid a chorus of cheers and yells.

"Men," said she, finally, "we have a prize here that brings us great riches. Here's the list of treasure:

"Hides, 1,900; 100 chests of cochineal; 24 coffers of wedges of silver; 8400 Castilian reals; 10 coffers of the King of Spain's treasure; 240 hundred-weight of dyestuffs; 780 pigs of lead."

"And what, miss, is all that worth, think you?" demanded Jim Rimple.

"Not less than 300,000 crowns," answered the girl after a pause.

At this the men looked at one another in silence. Then the one among them who was called Trueheart Jackson, a Sussex man, taking a long breath, "Well, mates," says he, "we're rich now, I'm thinking, and can go back home to Old England and live like gentlemen for the rest of our days."

"Hurrah!" shouted the men, mad with delight.

"And hang for it," said Nancy, looking first one and then another of them in the eye. The shot went home. Their faces fell, that is to say the faces of those who could not go home,

because of their crimes and rogueries, and were now reminded of them.

"Nay, but with gold we can buy pardons," cried Trueheart Jackson.

"That's so! That's so!" chorused the men, happy as children once more. "We can buy pardons."

"I can't buy a pardon in England for what I done," bemoaned Jim Rimple.

"Why, what did you do, Jim Rimple?" asked Nancy. "Nay, forgive me, 'twas hastily spoken. I meant it not."

"I stoled a sheep," replied Jim Rimple, wagging his head and rolling his eyes at her. "Thirty-eight year ago it were, come next Mich'elmas, nor have I seen a glimpse o' bonny England from that there day to this, and, God help me, I'll risk my neck and go."

"Buy pardons!" The girl put warning, alarm, a sneer, into her voice, for she was frightened at the turn events had taken, and the disposition the men showed to go back home. "They'll strip you of your gold—and, when that's gone, Tyburn! There's no justice now for any man, in England."

"The maid is right!" roared Jim Rimple. "There is no justice now in England."

This set the men nodding and bobbing their heads again.

"And would you be content with such poor spoils, men," the girl went on, "when another year, aye, another six months, or even a month, and you might return like gentlemen indeed, with ten times the treasure we have here?"

"The maid is right! The maid speaks wisdom," bellowed Jim Rimple. "Ten times the treasure, men!"

There was another outburst of cheering.

"Nor will we go until all may go in safety—until we have riches enough to make the venture worth the risk! What, men?" cried the girl.

"Aye, aye!" shouted the men.

Nancy glanced up, and there stood Captain Stillingfleet by the cabin door, a look in his eyes that was half anger, half amusement.

"And how will you navigate the ship, my hearties?" he demanded. The noisy demonstration ceased, and the men fell to shuffling their feet and looking at one another in deep

perplexity. "For know ye withal, men, I will have no part in this piracy, nor will I aid you in any way. To this decision will I adhere whatever betides. Go on with thy madness as thou wilt. I wash my hands of ye."

The men's faces fell prodigiously at this, but Nancy said, looking the Devon man very frankly in the face:

"We have a pilot among us, sir, and can do without you."

"Aye," he replied, "the Spaniard. But hark ye, men, an' ye put one of these Dons at your helm, and he will assuredly take ye into some Spanish city, nor will ye know better until it is too late and the guns of the fort are on you."

"Nay," interrupted Nancy, "I had no thought of the Spaniard."

"Who, then?"

"Myself!"

"You?"

"I know the use of charts and globes, the application of Gunter's scale and logarithms," she answered him, smiling. "I can take an observation as well as you. Nor am I the only one, for there is Pierre, the Frenchman, who

hath sailed twice to the Eastern Indies by the Portuguese route, and hath made many voyages in these very seas. He will be our pilot. So, which is it to be, men—England and Newgate, or the Spanish Main and riches?”

Such a volley of roars and shouts and yells of delight ascended at this brave speech, which fired their imaginations, while it set at rest their doubts, that the whole ship throbbed with it, and Barney, aflame with excitement, his face one great expanse of joyous mouth, leaped upon the cabin table, and tearing off his cap, proposed three cheers. They were given with a lusty will.

“Now, men!” cried Nancy. “I set you free from d’Ogeron’s castle—”

“Aye, that you did,” they chorused back with a great British bellow.

“Follow me, and we will seek purchase. But know ye, withal, I am the captain here, and my orders will be obeyed in all things. What say you, men? If there be among you one who will not abide by this, now is his time to speak and step forward that we may know just how we stand.”

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Not a man budged, as she looked each in turn full in the eye.

"It is agreed? Then I will draw the papers up, and all shall set their names down upon it, with the shares each shall have according to his rank and just deserts."

She seized a quill and a sheet, and wrote the agreement, according as she had seen them made upon the papers of some ship setting forth from Plymouth on a voyage of adventure, while all the men, save those on watch, and the sick, groaning from their indiscretions, in the scuppers, stood around and watched her eagerly. When it was finished she read it off:

"The captain (that is to say, myself) hath 10 shares.

The lieutenant (that is to say, Bras-de-Mort) hath 8 shares.

The master (that is to say, Jim Rimple) hath 7 shares.

The mate hath 6 shares.

The gunner hath 6 shares.

The boatswain hath 6 shares.

The carpenter hath 6 shares.

The gunner's mate hath 5 shares.

The quartermaster hath 4 shares.

The cooper hath 4 shares.

The cook hath 4 shares.

The steward hath 4 shares.

The coxswain hath 2 shares.

The corporal hath 2 shares.

The foremast man hath 1 share, to each."

She paused.

"Shall I put you down for a share, Captain Stillingfleet?" she asked, turning upon him suddenly.

"Nay," said he, shaking his head. "I will have naught of it."

"I will make you Chief Captain by Land, at eight shares."

"Thou art embarked upon a course of folly, I tell you," he replied, and shook his head again.

The men crowded about the paper now, and put their names upon it, most of them with a mark, and all of them with much labor and many twists of the tongue, as if they had been writing with that organ instead of a quill.

"I regret your decision, Captain Stillingfleet," said Nancy to him again while the men were busy, flashing at him one of her most winning smiles in which were blended, with

an incongruity that was wholly feminine, rail-lery and scorn—and admiration. “I would have you for my mate, an’ you were willing.”

Such a look lay in his eyes then that her cheeks crimsoned under her tan, as he said, speaking very slowly and softly, his voice full of that deep tone which seemed to touch some hidden chord in the very depths of her soul:

“I would be blithe to be your mate—and, by the living God, that I shall be in my own good time.” She lowered her eyes. “As for embarking in this mad piracy, I wash my hands of it, but I will speak more at large with you upon that subject later, and, mayhap, I shall drag you back from the pit into which you are rushing headlong.”

“My thanks, sir, for your concern,” she answered, regaining her composure and nodding to him lightly. “And now, men, you will muster before the mast and be told off in your proper watches.”

With a parting cheer they vanished, slapping each other upon the back, as happy as schoolboys. Nancy would have followed them, but Captain Stillingfleet detaining her

with a significant glance, she remained behind for a moment to speak with him.

"Look ye, young woman," said he, when they were alone, leaning across the cabin table and compelling her eyes to his own, "it is my duty to warn you that you are putting your head in a noose."

She shrugged her shoulders and turned to go. He stepped between her and the door.

"Listen to me, you must and shall," he continued.

"'Must' and 'shall' are words I like not, Captain Stillingfleet," she replied. "I have made my decision, and nothing shall shake me in that determination. As for piracy, as you call it, for more than a hundred years we English have fought the Spaniards below the tropic, whether our countries were at war in Europe or no. What won honors and glory for that brave knight Sir Francis Drake hath no terrors for me."

"Nay, child," he answered, "but Charles rules at Whitehall now, and times have changed."

"And will change again."

"By St. Bride! You talk like a Puritan. I say times have changed. I know that Governor Modyford at Jamaica hath orders to put down privateering against the Spaniards in the Indies, for I have seen those orders with my own eyes, in London, before they were sent here to him."

"Then I will carry on a war against the Spaniards on my own account," said she, at this bristling up. "With thirty English at my command—"

"Moreover," he interrupted, "this Spanish captain from whom we have taken this ship—"

"An English ship," she reminded him.

"Aye, an English ship, true enough."

"Although thou weren't enough of a seaman to discover the fact for yourself."

He bit his lip, then went on:

"An English ship—placed at the captain's disposal by King Charles himself. For this prisoner of ours—I should say yours—as he hath told me, is the Don Luis de Espinosa who hath long been his Majesty's confidential agent in Spain, who shared his exile in France and

Holland, and who hath now concluded his business in New Spain, where he hath had large interests and honors under the Spanish crown, and is now on his way to England to settle down as an English gentleman on certain estates in Devonshire that have been bestowed upon him by his Majesty, none others, indeed, than those belonging to the rebel Chillingworth, of whom I spoke to you not long since."

"Prithee, and what is this to me?" asked Nancy, with a drawl in her voice, a vast indifference, as if the blow had not told home.

"And so," added Captain Stillingfleet, "by going back to England we would have served all our interests and pleased the king to boot."

"Would we have served the interests of the men? You yourself did tell me that half of them would hang on Tyburn did they go back and show their noses in London. Nay, I will not play them false, nor deceive them in any way soever. My mind is made up, Captain Stillingfleet. My word hath been passed to my countrymen here, and I will abide with them, and we shall go away upon our own lay,

until we have found riches to buy our pardons beyond a doubt."

He shook his head at her, at this, as if at a loss to make her out.

"Why, odsfish!" said he, pounding the table with his fist. "But a few hours ago you were hot for going back to England."

"I have but availed myself of a woman's inalienable prerogative," she smiled.

"A what?" he cried, looking at her in perplexity.

"The right to change my mind. I am now killing two birds with one stone, where I had thought there was but one," she added, thinking of her father's estates, her own girlhood home, that she could remember but dimly, but loved, and now so strangely had an opportunity to save, temporarily at least, from the alien usurper to whom they had been awarded by the king. "Two birds, Captain Stillingfleet," she finished seriously, and turned to leave him just as the Spanish girl came into the cabin, very lovely in a gown of black and red.

Yvonne looked at Nancy without seeing her,

but in her languid eyes were smiles for the English captain, smiles which Nancy knew meant treachery and deceit, so that she pressed her teeth into her lip at the sight of them, but which he, poor fool, saw only as the smiles of a woman for a man. So he smiled back at her.

Whereat Nancy, with the majesty of a queen, for all her sailor's breeches and ragged shirt, made an imperious exit, yet lingered long enough to call back over her shoulder—

“I began with an ambition to kill one bird, Captain Stillingfleet, but found there were two—and have now discovered a third.”

A speech which mystified the poor fellow more than ever.

CHAPTER XII

THE PIRATES' ISLAND

That noon Nancy and Pierre had an observation, and finding themselves in the latitude of $18^{\circ}41''$ N., and longitude $75^{\circ}18''$ W., the girl called a council of the men before the mast and gave each among them a chance to express his desires. The sick men had recovered from the effects of their gluttony, and having fixed their names to the agreement, and been allotted their share of the spoils they had already taken, were as eager as the rest to scour the seas in quest of more.

The question of what to do with the Spaniards under the hatches was uppermost in Nancy's mind, and speaking of the matter to the men, all agreed to her proposal that they should be set ashore where they could find food and water and thus sustain themselves.

"So, lads," said Nancy, "since we are all of a mind on this point, our first dispute, what say you to putting these Dons on the main of

Cuba, from which, as the chart shows, we are not far distant?"

"Well, miss, I mean captain, asking your pardon," said Jim Rumble at this, rolling his eyes at her so earnestly that she had to bite her lips to keep from smiling in his rugged face, "but what's the use of getting a hornets' nest around our ears, as you might say, when there ain't exactly any need of it?"

"Why, what mean you by getting a hornets' nest around our ears, Jim Rumble?" demanded Nancy, glancing from him to Pierre, whose eyes were snapping and blinking away at a furious rate through the bushy hedge of whiskers that he seemed to be hiding behind.

"*Sacré! Mademoiselle,*" interjected the Frenchman, "Monsieur Jean Rumble he—"

"Jim Rumble, you frog," roared the master; "not Jean Rumble."

"Jean Rumble, then, monsieur, if you will have it that way," replied Pierre, shrugging his shoulders, while Jim Rumble gritted his teeth. "He is right, no? The fact that we are cruising in these waters will come to the ears of the Spaniards quickly enough as it is."

"That it will," bellowed Jim Rimple, "that it will, or I will kiss a pig."

"If we put these Dons on the Main, why, and they have legs, haven't they?" demanded Trueheart Jackson. "Then won't they just naturally walk off?"

"Well, and what if they do?" replied Nancy. "We shall be well rid of them."

"Aye, but suppose they get to one of their settlements," broke in Jim Rimple, wagging his head at a rate that threatened to send it any minute rolling into the scuppers, "and give the alarm? We would be undone, I'm thinking."

"Then, what is your plan, Jim Rimple?"

"A island, miss, I mean captain, asking your pardon. A small island, say we, eh, mates?"

The men grinned their approval of this sage advice, and Nancy, seeing the wisdom of it, said:

"Very well, men, an' as you are familiar in these parts, no doubt you have such a snug island in mind."

"Well, miss, captain, I mean, asking your pardon," replied Jim Rimple, "and that we

have, 'to be sure—or I will kiss a pig. Me and my mates have talked this over, and we think as how Cow Island would just about fit the bill.”

“Cow Island?”

“Aye, 'tis but a short league off the southwest horn of the main of Hispaniola, and snug enough, too, and we can get wood and water there—and then!”

He rolled his eyes at her and at the men in a most grotesque but significant manner, so that they burst into a roar of cheers.

“Cow Island it is then,” said Nancy, and gave her orders to Pierre, so that, coming about, they stood away S. E. by E.

All the night following and the next day, bearing away more to the east, they held this course in varying winds, and finally fell with the island, but, rounding the point into the harbor, a shot came across her bow, and rushing on deck Nancy beheld at anchor in the cove seven ships, of which the largest was a man-o'-war, a frigate of thirty-four guns. They were under the lee of the island. The sails hung lifeless. It was impossible to go about upon

the other tack. The men aboard the frigate were springing to quarters when the girl, her eyes aflame with excitement, called out to her men who had tumbled below to the gun-deck:

"Avast there, men, they're English!"

She hauled down the Spanish Ancient now and ran up the British ensign with her own hands. There was scarcely wind enough to spread her folds, but the men aboard the frigate and the other ships, too, recognized the colors, and a great cheer came across the waters to her. So they came to, and drifting into the cove, came to an anchor in eight fathoms.

The men were not long in making out now that the strangers they had come upon so suddenly were friends of their own kidney, so that Nancy, fearful for the treasure in the hold, and the danger they were in of one of the Spaniards disclosing the secret, decided to put a bold face upon the matter. She ordered out the captain's gig.

"But hark ye, men," said she, speaking in a low tone, for they were now under the scrutiny of the other ships, "say no word to these

strangers of the riches we have between decks here, for though they be our countrymen, mayhap they would rob us with as easy a mind as though we were the Viceroy himself. Nor say any word soever of the Spaniards we have here, lest we lose at last what we have already gained at so much pains."

"The maid speaks truly," cried Jim Rimple in half a roar, as though he tried to whisper, and there was a nodding of heads among the men, so that Nancy felt that they could be relied upon.

"And now, men," she went on, "do you remove the Spanish captain and his daughter from their cabin and put them in the hold with their countrymen. Captain Stillingfleet," she added, coolly, turning upon him suddenly, "since he who is not with us is against us, you will oblige me by stepping below—and as quickly as may be."

"And what if I refuse?" he asked, his Saxon eyes smiling at her quizzically.

"Why, then, sir," says she, "that ship yonder is an English ship of war, an' I make no mistake."

"Thou art quite right," says he. "It is an English frigate, for 'tis H. M. S. *Oxford*, as I should know well enough, for I have served upon her. So you see you have come to the end of your rope already, as I knew thou wouldst, though much sooner, I confess, than I had expected."

"Nay, Master Stillingfleet," she answered him very quietly, "thou art a poor prophet, for I have just begun, and you will go below, and quietly, and make no alarm or I will shoot thee dead upon the deck, for that thou shalt not betray me to this ship of war I am firmly resolved."

She suddenly pulled a cocked pistol from her bosom, and pointed it at his head.

"Fie, Mistress Nancy," said he, gazing at her like a great overgrown schoolboy, "you would not shoot, and that I know very well—so have done with this playing."

"Give me no cause to prove my determination to you, I pray you, sir," she replied as quietly as before, her face suddenly going pale beneath her tan. "Were my own life only at stake that I truly would not, but there are

things in this business you do not comprehend, and for those things I would kill you were it necessary. Go below, sir, I beg of you."

"By St. Bride! That I will never do," he replied, and took a step towards her, looking into the barrel of her pistol, and, beyond that, into the depths of her blue eyes.

But Bras-de-Mort slipping up upon him at this—they were on the side of the great cabin away from the ships—thrust the muzzle of a musket into his face, with so unmistakable a look in his snapping black eyes that, giving one glance about the deck, and seeing no friendly countenance there, Stillingfleet presently turned upon his heel and went below, and the hatches were all battened down and a guard set.

The gig being now at the ladder in the waist, Captain Nancy went into her, with Jim Rimple, and Bras-de-Mort, Trueheart Jackson and the boy Barney at the oars, and they pulled over to the frigate.

What was their astonishment then, as they went over the side and were greeted by one who seemed to be in command, and his subordi-

nates who were gathered at the rail, to see seated upon a coil of rope Yellow Eyes, the tongueless man, his sinister orbs like molten gold glaring at them with the ferocity of a wild beast, his hairless head glistening in the brilliant tropical sun like some fleshless skull.

"Faith! Mademoiselle," cried Barney, "'tis that devil again, the man with the yellow eyes."

But she had seen him, too, and stood there silent, with parted lips, nor heeded the greeting of a tall, handsome but slightly over-stout man of thirty or thereabouts, with a heavy but far from unpleasing Welsh face and a look of great power and determination in his commanding eyes and strong mouth and chin.

Trueheart Jackson nudged her slyly.

"'Tis Henry Morgan," he whispered. "Hast heard of him? The greatest among us in these seas I warrant you, aye, the greatest since Drake. I was with him at Porto Bello."

Nancy turned to him and took his hand at his greeting, and something that she saw in his eyes made her suddenly conscious of her boys' clothes, so that she stammered and blushed before him. He, as if to cover her

embarrassment, presented her then to Captain Edward Collier, of his Majesty's navy, who, Nancy presently understood, was in command of the *Oxford*. But why he should be there, among these men so plainly of another and more lawless trade, she could by no means discover.

Captain Morgan greeted Jackson and Jim Rimple familiarly as old friends, and, while she spoke with Captain Collier, the latter drawing the Welshman aside whispered something to him, whereat he straightened up and stared sharply at the girl, admiration deepening in his eyes.

"We are well met, madame," said he, taking off his hat and giving her a great bow. "We touched at Tortuga on our way thither, to pick up a few of the French there who occasionally join with us in our enterprises, and thus I learned of your great feat. So you are the English girl who threw the sand in old d'Ogeron's eyes and got clean away, with his ship and his prisoners to boot! 'Sdeath! You had the island in a turmoil when we arrived there, and but for the fact of our great

force the governor would have taken out his spite on us. He was like a wild man, yet sounded your praises withal—nor do I blame him.”

It was Nancy's turn to blush anew at this, and, when he offered her his arm, gallantly, she took it without a word and walked beside him to the cabin.

“And right glad am I of this meeting, too, eh, Collier,” he added. “We will need this stout ship she brings—though I confess the brigantine *Baptiste*, which I thought I knew full well—”

“’Tis not the same,” said Nancy impulsively, and then wished she had not spoken. “The *Baptiste* was lost in the storm, and this is a ship which we, in our necessity, did take.”

“What!” cried Captain Morgan, standing off and surveying her dramatically. “A good beginning, upon my soul, Collier! You see,” he added to Nancy, “we are met here in anticipation of an assault upon Maracaibo, on the Main, and for this purpose need another ship at least, and more men.”

“But that,” said she in considerable surprise,

"is such an adventure as is no longer countenanced by his Majesty, so that I am in vast perplexity at finding you thus upon one of his Majesty's ships of war. Assuredly we cannot be at war now with Spain."

"Nay," interrupted Captain Collier, with a sidelong glance at her boyish costume and the tangled mop of golden hair tumbling from beneath her cap, "we are always at war with Spain below the tropic."

"But I am told that Governor Modyford, at Jamaica, hath orders to prevent privateering in the Indies," she persisted.

"Had orders," corrected Captain Collier. "They have been modified. Odsfish! A neat jest, hey, Morgan? Ha—ha—ha! Didst hear that—Modyford's orders modified. By my soul! 'Tis good enough to tell to the king, himself. Have you no sense of humor, Morgan?"

"Only a fair one, Collier," replied Morgan drily. "But what he hath said is true enough," he added, turning to Nancy. "I cannot myself keep track of his Majesty's weather-cock politics, now interfering with our busi-

ness in these seas, and again countenancing our private warfare against Spain; nor do I concern myself much with them, for it has been England's policy since Drake's time to give sugar pills to the Spanish Ambassador at London, while winking at what goes on in this part of the world. So I never know whether a treaty is in force or no, and so have dismissed the subject from my mind. Three months ago, at Spain's complaint, they were all for hanging at Port Royal some of the best men who have ever fought with me against the Papists. And now for some mysterious reason all this hath been changed, and Collier is to go with me to Maracaibo, clandestinely, but nathless he is to go."

"I do not pretend to know all that goes on in his Majesty's cabinet," said Captain Collier. "Adventuring against the Spaniard was vigorously put down for a time. But now it seems the Spanish Ambassador at London hath been hoodwinked again, and things are to be as before—until his Majesty is browbeaten once more by the Spanish crown. I myself have lately brought new orders to Jamaica, and this

expedition has been secretly fitted out there by the governor's orders. When we have dealt this blow to the Spanish power in the Americas, you shall find a market for your spoils at London Bridge, an' you wish it."

"You inform me on a point I was much in ignorance on," replied Nancy.

"Join us," said Captain Morgan, "an' your exploit will be winked at. We have absolution in advance. The captain here hath a pocketful of pardons in blank for such as may need the boon. But join us in the round-house, and we will talk more at large."

They were at the cabin door now. But before they entered, Nancy nodded towards Yellow Eyes who still sat upon his coil of rope.

"How came you by the dumb man?" she asked.

"Why, as to that, how did you know that he is dumb?" asked Captain Morgan, throwing at her a sharp look from beneath his heavy brows.

"He is no stranger to me," Nancy replied, while heartily wishing she had not been so quick to speak.

"What know you of him?"

"He stowed himself in the forward hold," cried Barney, who had been aching for a chance to enter the conversation, and until then had seen no opening, "so we cut him adrift—that is, Nancy did—and here he is."

"So Nancy cut him adrift!" laughed Captain Morgan, a twinkle in his eye. "I see you know something of the man, madame, although the explanation of the lad is not over clear. I picked him up in an open boat, and all but dead of thirst."

"Aye, we know him," said Barney, his freckled face aglow with delight to be talking thus with the great Captain Morgan. "Why, 'twas he who betrayed us at the governor's castle, and gave the alarm, when we escaped from the fort on the hill."

Captain Morgan's face grew black as a thunder-cloud at this.

"A traitor, then!" he cried. "We give short shrift to such."

He called to his quartermaster.

"Throw this rogue below," he ordered roughly.

"Nay, have pity on him, sir, I beg of you," said Nancy, laying her hand upon the captain's arm, "for though he hath been the source of all my misery, my heart swells for him—he is so wretched with his great affliction I cannot bear the thought of his suffering. Spare him for my sake, for it was I who cast him adrift in the longboat, so that he would have perished but for the accident of his discovery, and that would have been a sin upon my head."

"She talks like a Puritan!" cried Captain Morgan.

But he gave an order to one of the men that Yellow Eyes should not be injured, and the dumb man was hauled away between two seamen, kicking and struggling, and carried into the hold. Then Captain Morgan led the way into the cabin where a great company of officers of the fleet were gathered, eating and drinking.

Nancy, in the place of honor at the head of the table, between the two captains, was obliged to tell the story of the escape of the English prisoners from the French at Tortuga, and of the part she had played. When she had fin-

ished, Captain Collier ordered a salute of thirty guns to be fired in her honor.

While the cannon roared, she studied the faces of her companions, and gave a start as she recognized a familiar figure, the little monk whom she had seen first in the market square at Lille, and then upon the ship in which she had been kidnaped, the little monk whom she had left apparently asleep beneath d'Ogeron's table.

"How came he here?" she asked, pointing him out.

"Who?"

"The monk."

"Monk!" roared Morgan, choking with laughter. "Little Cochinillo? Why, madame, that is a better jest than Captain Collier's. Did he fool you with his cowl and habit? That is the greatest rascal unhung—three times a galley slave, twice branded. But a bright and happy soul, withal, and one of my men who fell wounded at Porto Bello and was sent off to Spain, but escaped from the hulks and so found his way back to the rendezvous, with the aid of his disguise, and indeed he has

picked up a lot of the ritual at odd times and serves us very well in that capacity."

The monk, for so she called him, seeing himself under discussion, arose unsteadily to his feet, a bottle in one hand and a gobbet of greasy meat in the other, glibly told how d'Ogeron had commanded him to marry him to the girl, and how he had indignantly refused, and declared most solemnly that he had aided in her escape, whereupon Captain Morgan, Nancy making no contradiction, demanded that a salute be fired in his honor.

Then Barney recounted the story of the treachery of Yellow Eyes, and how he had wanted to go back and gag him. Whereat the jovial pirates roared with laughter, and Captain Morgan, in his hand a handsome silver goblet that he had stolen from the governor of Porto Bello, drank his health in *rosa solis*, a strong punch brandy, spices and hot water, and ordered a salute of ten guns in his honor. And Barney, overcome by the honor, his whole face in complete eclipse, so widely distended were his joyous jaws, leaped upon the table and led the buccaneers in a

round of mighty cheers that made the frigate shiver.

The admiration in the glances that Captain Morgan bestowed upon her made Nancy feel ill at ease. But she was taken all aback, when suddenly he jumped up, and filling the silver goblet proposed her health.

"Look ye, monk," said he, draining his tankard at a single toss, "out with thy prayer-book, thou gospel-slinging shark, and read the marriage service. By the Gods! This Devon maid doth please me hugely. She is the first ever I thought fit to be the wife of Henry Morgan."

"Nay, sir," said she at this, her eyes filled with alarm, and drawing away from him as he bent down and sought to take her hand, "not so fast, I pray you, and, besides, this is no priest, but an impostor."

"Think on it, madame!" cried he, waving aside her objections. "Thou art a woman after my own heart—fearless and resourceful. Thou hast taken thy first ship as neatly as I could have done it myself, and that thou art here with thy men as their captain showeth me

that thou hast ability withal. Join with me and we will scourge these Dons until they come to know who are masters in the Indies.

"Nay," he added, when she would have stopped him, "have no fear as to the consequences. For the time, the good old days of Drake and Hawkins have come back once more. Follow me, and I will lead thee to riches and fame. Aye, I will make thee a Lady, for I do tell thee, madame, when I return from this expedition upon which I am now setting forth, I shall kneel at his Majesty's feet and he will say to me, 'Arise, Sir Henry Morgan.'"

The officers, who had been listening to him with the attention that men ever give to those in authority above them, broke into cheers at this brave speech, and Barney, leaping up and proposing a salute of thirty guns in honor of their chief, and thirty more for his gracious majesty King Charles, such a volleying began again as showed these pirates to be as wasteful of their powder as, when they did have it, they were with their money.

"Show her the papers you have, Collier," Captain Morgan added, when he could make

himself heard between guns. "They will set her mind at rest, I warrant you. Secret instructions these be, madame, for the benefit of Englishmen here on the Spanish Main, with pardons in blank for those that need them—a sort of general amnesty, indeed."

Captain Collier passed her then a packet of papers, bearing the royal seal. Nancy had just taken them, when, with a cracking roar and a great burst of flame which seemed to envelop the whole ship, and filled the round-house with heavy clouds of suffocating smoke, the forward magazine exploded. The first explosion was followed almost immediately, before the company could gain their feet, by another more terrible than the first, and the frigate seemed torn asunder by the force of it. The deck rose, fell away and crumbled beneath them; the mighty timbers were blown in all directions.

Of what happened after the first explosion Nancy never had a clear idea. Mechanically she thrust Captain Collier's papers into her shirt. Tongues of flame leaped toward her out of the billows of dense black smoke.

She shut her eyes in terror, and, when she opened them, she was in the depths of the sea, entangled in a mass of wreckage. She freed herself, and then, her lungs bursting with pain, shot to the surface.

As she came up, gasping and blowing, there, not a dozen strokes from her, was Barney, astride the shattered end of the mainmast. She swam towards him, and he dragged her to a place of safety beside him.

All about were débris and wreckage of every description, with here and there a man's head showing above the waves. As she looked, the shattered hull of the frigate, in one last convulsion, went down by the head, to be seen again no more.

Small boats put out immediately from the other vessels at anchor in the cove; and one from the *Snapdragon*, as they saw, pulled towards them.

"Faith, mademoiselle," asked the Irish lad, when he had emptied himself of the salt water, "what happened?"

"The ship blew up, Barney," answered the girl, "and 'tis only by the mercy of God that

we are alive. Few on board of her, I think, could have survived it."

"Did Captain Morgan, do you suppose?" he asked after a bit.

"Why, I do not know as to that—I cannot see him anywhere."

"Would you care if he didn't?"

"Care, lad?"

"Aye."

"Of course I'd care, Barney."

"Well," he replied, giving her a queer look, "but I know one who wouldn't."

"And who might that be, Barney?"

"Captain Stillingfleet. Faith, he'd be wild if he knew what Captain Morgan said to you just now."

"Be quiet, Barney," said the girl sharply. "Captain Stillingfleet cares naught what Captain Morgan thinks of me."

"Oh, and doesn't he now?"

"Say no more of that to me, lad." Then, after a pause, "Barney, canst keep a secret?"

"Aye, that I can."

"Then I know who blew up the ship."

"Blew it up?"

"Aye, blew it up, Barney—for revenge."

"Revenge! You mean—" he lowered his voice to the most mysterious whisper at his command—"you mean Captain Stillingfleet?"

"Thou art too ridiculous, Barney. Of course not! It was Yellow Eyes."

"The dumb man?"

"I feel sure of it. Look, there he is now!"

The boy turned as she pointed, and there struggling in the waves close by them, clinging to a spar, was the tongueless man, a great cut over his temple from which the blood gushed, staining the water all around him. A look of hatred blazed from his eyes.

The longboat from the *Snapdragon* was coming up rapidly now, with Cherie, her face as pale as death, crouching in the bow, and searching the wreckage with restless eyes. They pointed the dumb man out to her, and he was hauled aboard. As they came on now to where they clung to the mainmast, the French girl cried:

"Thank God, you are saved! But where is my man? Have you seen aught of Bras-de-Mort?"

"I have seen him not," answered Nancy, sadly, "but some have been picked up by boats from the other ships. Please God, he is among them."

"Please God," echoed Cherie.

The longboat continued its search for those that might be saved, and the French girl continued her quest with eyes so blurred with tears she could scarcely see. At last they found the Frenchman in another boat and took him into their own, and then pulled back to the *Snapdragon*, picking up Jim Rimple and Trueheart Jackson on the way.

And so they returned to their own ship in safety, all who had gone away, with one among them they had not expected to see again. As they helped the dumb man over the side, Barney plucked at Nancy's sleeve.

"Some day," said he, pointing significantly to Yellow Eyes, "he will go too far with me—that fellow."

CHAPTER XIII

CAPTAIN MORGAN LOSES A PRIZE

Back on the quarterdeck of her own ship Captain Nancy paced restlessly. With a treasure of upwards of 300,000 crowns in the hold, the Spanish crew prisoners between decks, and Don Luis and his daughter under heavy guard, she realized that she was confronted by a situation demanding all that she had of tact and diplomacy, the more especially since Captain Stillingfleet was now not only no longer a friend, but an active enemy.

As for the treasure, she understood from what she had learned aboard the frigate that it might safely be kept as lawful prize. This she was determined to do, now that she had won the men to her leadership by that promise. As for the Spanish captain, it was but loyalty to her father and the cause to keep this inter-loper from the stolen estates that awaited him in England, and this also she was resolved to accomplish.

With the Spaniards set ashore on some island, she could count upon the greed and the love of adventure of her men to keep them in those seas as long as she might choose to stay. And this she vowed to do, until it became too late for Godfrey Stillingfleet to work any injury to General Sidney and her father, or the other Puritan conspirators in France.

But as she pondered upon these considerations, the conviction was borne home to her that, after all, they were really trivial beside another matter which forced itself upon her attention as often as she sought to thrust it into the background.

Captain Henry Morgan was not to be disposed of so easily, and, as she went over again and again the scene in the great cabin of the *Oxford*, that had terminated so dramatically and terribly, yet so providentially for her, she realized that in this big, masterful, self-confident Welsh buccaneer she had to deal with a man of a different stamp from any whom she had ever known before—a man who was accustomed to have his way in all things, who was not to be deterred by any considerations

whatsoever from the accomplishment of any undertaking upon which he might fix his iron will.

And so, contemplating her predicament from every angle, she resolved upon a measure that was like to be her undoing. In the pirate's love-making, rude as it was, there had been a depth of passion she had not failed to recognize, nor did it repel her. For try as she would to rid herself of its appeal, the primal woman in her responded to it with a force she could resist but not deny. The thought of him made her conscious for the first time of her ragged shirt and coarse breeches, her sunburned arms and limbs. Looking over the rail in thoughtful mood, the burnished waters of the Caribbean sent back to her troubled eyes a reflection that brought a blush to her tanned cheeks.

"I'll do it!" she whispered softly to herself, and quitting the quarterdeck, all breathless with excitement, demanded of the Fleming who was on guard before the forecastle that he summon to her Cherie, the French girl. Then she burst into the cabin that had been occupied by the Spanish captain's daughter.

"Well, Mistress Chillingworth," said she to herself, "now that thou hast turned pirate, as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb. Since I have stolen a whole ship, 'twill be no greater sin to add the theft of a few clothes to my other crimes."

With this she began to rummage in the Spanish girl's chests, and presently, finding that for which she searched, had the whole cabin littered with linens and silks. But first she let down her tawny hair, and, assisted by Cherie who tore herself away from Bras-de-Mort, combed out the snarls, dancing about with shrieks and groans, for the process, after so long a neglect, was a painful one. Then she fell upon the petticoats, the laces and ribbons.

An hour passed. Another slipped by. Nancy and Cherie were oblivious to their surroundings, intoxicated by the greatest of all feminine delights. From this blissful state they were aroused by a hail and the tramp of feet upon the deck. Mindful of her duties and obligations then, she threw open the door and stepped out, just as Captain Morgan came over the side.

The buccaneer regarded her for a long instant as if he had been suddenly cast into bronze. Then off came his wide-brimmed hat, with its nodding crimson plume that swept the deck, what with the great bow he made.

"Madame," said he, taking her hand and kissing it as gallantly as if he had been a courtier, "the explosion on the frigate just now interrupted me. I have come to resume where I left off, and to say that I have fetched the monk along. 'Sdeath! Madame, my heart felt near to bursting when first I saw you yonder, and now that I behold you in your proper person I am all the more aflame for you."

But though the mellow light in his eyes, which for the moment lost their customary hardness, bore witness to the ardor of his words, his glances were not so wholly occupied with the scrutiny of the beauty of her face and girlish figure as to be oblivious to the beauty of the ship, which he was quick to note and to appreciate in hull and spars as in the line and color of a pretty woman. To both he gave his frank admiration, and, being no less a seaman than a lover, was so entirely impartial

that he bestowed his praises equally upon both, in the same breath, until it seemed, that, with a most remarkable economy of language, as befitting a man of action rather than of speech, he made a single word serve a double duty.

“ ‘Sblood, madame!” he cried, with another great bow and flourish. “Well rigged thou art, truly, nor over-rigged to wrong you in your sailing. A great rake forwards on, like a French craft, which is as I like, making for the more speed.”

Leading the way into the round-house, as if he felt himself already master there, his exclamations of delight increased with every step he took, until at last he cried:

“By our Lady! Madame, we are well met, indeed. Here you have as staunch a vessel of fourteen guns as ever I hope to see, and ports could be cut on the gun-deck for more ordnance, though I depend not upon my cannon in a fight, so that I can sail my ship to lay aboard, and bring my enemy under the musket fire of my men. Still, I scorn them not, and we can use them.

“Such another ship as this with us, an’ the

frigate had not blown up and bereft me of my largest, and I would take Panama this expedition. Join me in my plans, madame, and though the larger undertaking be deferred until a later time, nathless we shall go away now to the Main and gain a king's ransom from the rich Spanish cities, you, as my wife, to share equally with me in the adventure, and your men to share equally with my own, on the terms which they well know, as the code of the brethren of the coast—no purchase, no pay. Come, marry me and sail with me."

"As to the second part of your proposal, sir," replied Nancy, seating herself at the table where she had drawn up the agreement with her English comrades, "I confess it hath much to commend itself as well to my taste as to my desires."

Morgan smiled and rubbed his hands with a gesture of satisfaction.

"As for the rest of what you say, sir," she added, "I thank you for the compliment you have paid me, but that can never be."

"Can never be?" echoed Captain Morgan.

"Nay, sir, it is impossible," she answered,

turning her eyes from his. "I—I—I have promised myself to another," she faltered, stammering, and daring not to look at him.

"'Sdeath, madame," answered the buccaneer nonchalantly, as if vastly relieved, "do not let that trouble you. Were you already married, nathless I would wed thee still."

"But that would be a sin, sir," cried Nancy, looking at the pirate with wide-open eyes.

Captain Morgan threw back his head and laughed a hearty laugh that shook his whole huge frame.

"'Sblood, madame!" he returned, when he could recover his breath, "there is no such thing as sin below the tropic, so make your mind easy on that score, my lady, and I will fetch the monk in and have the service read."

Whereupon he whistled loudly. Two of his men, savage-looking fellows, bareheaded and unkempt, with knives and pistols in their belts, slouched up and gave him a rude salute. He bade them summon the priest, and presently Cochinillo, the pretended monk, appeared from the direction of the cook-room, a pig's knuckle in one hand and in the other a hunk of half-

baked dough. His heavy face shone with grease. With a sigh he thrust the bone and the bread into his habit and entered the cabin, rubbing his hands upon his frock.

"Hast thou thy prayer book about thee, monk?" roared the pirate.

The little man choked out an inarticulate answer, sending forth a cloud of crumbs and gristle from his mouth that was so crammed with food that very likely he would have strangled to death before their eyes had not the buccaneer rained a shower of mighty blows between his shoulders.

"Curse thee!" cried Captain Morgan. "Thou art always stuffing thy belly. Out with thy book and say thy mumble and jumble over us, and be quick about it! For lack of a real priest you will suit me as well as another."

"Not so fast, Captain Morgan, an' you please, sir!" Nancy's face had gone quite pale. "Did I not tell you that I was already bespoken?" She blushed and hung her head. "Well, not that, exactly," she faltered, "but I have already promised myself to another. I cannot marry you."

"That's what she told d'Ogeron," spluttered the monk. She wouldn't do it, absolutely refused, said she —"

"Silence!" bellowed Morgan. "Curses on d'Ogeron, and on you, too. Think you I am to be thwarted of my desires because he knew not that a woman's 'no' means 'yes'?"

He passed quickly around the table and grasped the girl, though not over-roughly, by the arm. Though she saw in his flushed face and his eyes, wherein lay a light that burned with brilliance, no intent to do her harm, but only desire and love for her, she shrank from him with alarm and uttered a sharp cry that brought the boy Barney to the cabin door, a smile dying away on his freckled face. Not having witnessed the beginning of the scene within the round-house, and totally mistaking the motives and attitude of Captain Morgan, his Irish mouth quivered like a terrier's.

Barney's admiration for the mighty pirate, whose fame in those seas he had been drinking in around the forecastle lamp, vanished in an instant. His ideas were ever good ones, but in his singularly simple mind there was room

for but one at a time. He saw only his friend and comrade upon the defensive before the Welshman, and without waiting to inquire into the circumstances, he bounded into the cabin, and with the spring of a young wolf threw himself full tilt upon the buccaneer, digging his claws into the man's brawny throat and feeling with his teeth for his ear.

Captain Morgan, giant though he was, staggered beneath the onslaught, which took him so by surprise that it all but threw him off his feet. But he quickly recovered himself, not without effort, and, shaking off the lad as a dog would have rid himself of a rat clinging to his nose, sent Barney reeling into the partition, where he lay in a corner dazed and dizzy, the blood streaming from a cut over his right eye.

"Shame, Captain Morgan!" Nancy cried hotly, dropping to her knees beside the Irish boy. "'Tis but a lad!"

"Nay, you wrong me, madame," replied the pirate sheepishly. "He took me so by surprise I scarcely thought on what I was doing. 'Sdeath! He flew at me like a lion.'

"He did but go to my rescue, sir," answered the girl, "as he hath ever done since first we met in the market place at Lille."

"Then he is my friend—and shall ever be. Come, lad, my hand on it."

He held out his huge fist, but Barney, scowling and shaking his head, refused it and climbed weakly to his feet, and stood there glaring at him and wiping the blood upon his shirt.

"Nay, lad," continued the buccaneer, "but be my friend and you shall never need another. There is a common bond between us—I love your mistress as you do, aye, ten thousand times more. And just now, when you rushed to her succor, I meant her no injury, but was but telling her of my love and asking her to be my wife, that we might go away together to the Spanish Main on an adventure that most certainly would bring riches to all of us.

"And you shall go with us, lad, and for your faithfulness to her in the past, and because you love her, too, you shall share with us far above your rank and service, and go home to England at last with money jingling in your pocket.



Come, lad, say you will be friend to Henry Morgan. Go with us, where gold, and fame, and the zest of a man's life await us, and we shall have our hearts' desires, all of us—my hand upon it."

There was the glow of romance and the lure of glory in his words, and a depth of passion in his voice that sent the warm blood tingling and dancing through Nancy's veins. For one rebellious moment her heart responded to their appeal with a surging desire. All the wantonness of her untamed nature was crying to be free, to follow this freebooter wherever his insatiable lust for gold might lead him.

If he had seized her then in his arms, he might have had her for the asking; but he let his moment of opportunity pass him by unheeded, as every man does with some woman once in a lifetime. And so there slipped from Henry Morgan a greater prize than all the treasures the Spanish Indies held, for Nancy, turning now to Barney, saw in his face hatred and doubt and mistrust. Her ardor cooled. Composure returned to her. She was once more mistress of herself.

When Barney slunk out of the cabin, and Captain Morgan addressed her once more, he found her shrinking from him as before. While the Irish lad sped down the deck to the forecastle, whispering an excited word to every man he met, and finally, followed by Jim Rimple and Pierre, his whiskers bristling, dived down below on some mysterious mission, Captain Morgan returned to the assault of the citadel of her heart, only to find it more strongly fortified than ever, so that in his arguments he passed from persuasion to force.

Eloquence gave way to anger, and failing by less peaceful means to return to that stage of his love-making where he had found himself when interrupted, he adopted, too late, methods to which he was more accustomed, and had just taken Nancy, protesting, in his arms, when the cabin door was burst open and Captain Stillingfleet was there, a dozen British faces framing the companionway behind him.

So Henry Morgan released the girl from his embrace, for there was something in Godfrey's mien that held his eager attention, even as it held Nancy's, a look that he had never

seen before in such eyes or upon such firm lips, but that Nancy had seen there in the flash of the lightning on the old *Baptiste* the night he had held her close against his breast and had kissed her; and she beheld it with different emotions, too, for whereas the buccaneer felt instinctively for his pistols, she as instinctively felt for her handkerchief—the Spanish girl's handkerchief. Not having included that article of toilette in her borrowed plumage, she forbore to weep.

Captain Morgan also changed his mind. He found the hilt of a pistol with a practised hand, but did not draw, and not solely because of the compelling look in the deep blue eyes of Master Stillingfleet. The faces in the doorway also carried a message that he was quick to read.

CHAPTER XIV

CAPTAIN STILLINGFLEET TAKES COMMAND

"Who, in God's name," said Captain Morgan, after a pause, very coolly, and measuring his antagonist at his leisure, taking note of the breadth and the brawn of him, "may you be, and to what do I owe this intrusion?"

"If you have not heard my name, that is a misfortune you may repair in your own way and in your own time," replied Captain Stillingfleet, coldly. "As for what I am doing here, since when has it been an intrusion for the master of a ship to step into his own round-house?"

"You master here!" exclaimed the pirate with an incredulous sneer. "Nay, but the maid is captain. Her own men did confirm it not long since upon the frigate that was lately blown up under me."

"Did Mistress Nancy tell you she was captain?" demanded Captain Stillingfleet, still

looking at the buccaneer with unblinking eyes.

"Why, as to that, no; but she did act the part."

"That is as it may be. But since she did not tell you that she is in command, I will tell you that I am." And with this he smiled at the girl, as if to say, "Now is your opportunity to speak."

But Nancy, glancing then in vexation at Captain Morgan, bit her lip, and said nothing. Captain Morgan, looking sharply at the men framed against the sky in the cabin door heard him add, "Aye, ask them, an' you will, since you doubt my word." And he turned full upon Jim Rible such a look as started him spluttering.

"Aye, he is our captain," said Jim Rible huskily, clearing his throat and glaring in his turn at his comrades. "'Tis a man's work."

"I can talk with you as well as with another," said Captain Morgan, addressing Master Stillingfleet in a more conciliatory tone. "My business is come to quickly. I have urged this lady here to go away with me to Maracaibo, on the Main, where the Spaniards have rich set-

lements, and where we can find gold and silver, as well as huge quantities of dyes and goods withal, and precious gems."

"Think you we would be such fools as to do your fighting, only to have you in the end gain the lion's share of the spoils?" demanded Captain Stillingfleet, while the men behind him nodded their approval.

"As for that, I can quiet your alarms," replied the pirate briskly, "by offering to you the same terms I have offered to madame."

"The same terms?"

"No purchase, no pay—the law of the coast—you and your men to share equally with my own lieutenants and my own men. The same terms I offered her, save in one particular."

"And what was the exception?"

"That she be my wife and share equally with me."

"That shall never be!" cried Captain Stillingfleet, more vehemently than he had yet spoken.

"So she hath told me herself," returned the buccaneer dryly.

"Ah!"

"The lady it seems, will have naught of me."

A smile beamed in the eyes of Godfrey Stillingfleet. Then they darkened quickly as the pirate added with genuine feeling in his voice.

"She hath promised herself to another. 'Sdeath" he finished savagely, and putting his hand again upon the hilt of his pistol, "perchance thou art the man."

"Nay," answered Captain Stillingfleet, while Nancy hung her head and would not look at him. "That is not my good fortune."

"'Sblood! Since we are both in the same boat, it should be easy for us to come to terms. Go away with me on this adventure and you shall fare as I do, forty shares between us, and as for the girl, an' you please, we will let the dice decide that issue between us two."

Captain Stillingfleet took a step forward. "Get out of my round-house," he said. There was no sound for a long instant but the shuffling of the men's feet and the lapping of the tide along the side. Nancy looked up, her eyes smiling, a great contentment in her heart, her mind at rest.

"You refuse me?" demanded the buccaneer.

"When we go pirating, we go on our own account," replied Godfrey Stillingfleet, "asking favors of none, sharing our booty only among ourselves."

There was a murmur of approval behind him, and Barney's shrill voice chortling as he capered about the deck outside.

"As for the girl," added Captain Stillingfleet, "though she be not master here, she is mistress. We are guided not by her commands, but by her wishes. If she declines to marry you or have aught to do with your schemes, Captain Morgan, rest assured she will not lack for arms to back up those refusals."

The satisfaction of the crew of the *Snapdragon*, that is to say, of the Englishmen who had escaped from Tortuga, increased at this, and Barney's countenance thrust between Jim Rimple's knotty legs bore a smile so incredibly vast that one would have sworn he did not have a freckle to his name.

"Aye!" boomed Jim Rimple, rolling his eyes at his mates as he spoke. "She will not lack for arms."

"Since that is your decision," replied Cap-

tain Morgan, making no great effort to hide his chagrin, "mayhap you have powder and ball that you could spare me from your store. I do assure you, the loss of the *Oxford* just now, with all her ammunition, was a heavy blow."

"That is another matter, and may be arranged," answered Captain Stillingfleet. "We have seven or eight hundred pigs of lead which we would gladly exchange for salted and smoked meat of hogs and cattle and such other provisions as you may have by you in greater abundance than you need."

"Call it settled then," agreed the pirate, with an attempt at good humor. "I will send aboard the victuals you stand in need of and my men will fetch away the lead."

The bargain struck, Captain Morgan called his boat and went off to his own ship anchored further up the cove, in shore, though not without a parting bow to Nancy, who sat now dejectedly at the cabin table, crestfallen at the course events had taken, yet considering herself fortunate, on the whole, at the successful termination of what had threatened to become

an awkward situation for her. Already her mind was busy with the future, searching for some play whereby she would be able to gain once more the upper hand, and not doubting but that she should find one.

Before Morgan had fairly pushed off Captain Stillingfleet, full of large schemes, was busily engaged putting them into execution. He set the men at work, bringing up the pigs of lead, which fortunately were stowed away in the forward hold where they could be got at readily without disturbing or disclosing the Spanish prisoners. And by the time Captain Morgan returned, this time in a longboat full of men, great piles of the metal lay in the scuppers waiting to be taken off.

Captain Morgan, in thoughtful mood, paced the deck, and seemed much pleased at the sight of so much lead, but whether the brain behind his restless eyes was busy with thoughts of how he should use it against the Dons, or shaped a plot boding ill for Nancy and himself, Captain Stillingfleet, who watched the pirate and his tatterdemalions narrowly, could by no means make out.

The buccaneer made no move to return to his own ship when the first boat-load of lead went over the side and was pulled off, nor did any of the victuals and provisions he had promised in return make an appearance. Two of his men he dispatched to the island with orders which he whispered to them, and then fell to pacing the deck again moodily, as the *Snapdragon's* crew toiled over their task in the broiling sun.

Now and then the pirate turned upon Captain Stillingfleet his searching eyes, but there was something in the young fellow's Saxon face that evidently did not wholly please him. For after such scrutinies he would scowl and grind his jaws and turn his attention to the men, as if mentally taking stock of them. And Stillingfleet, quite well aware that the buccaneer had sailed with some of them in the past, was not easy in his mind.

Casting an eye ashore, he observed that the buccaneers were flocking down to the beach in large numbers and putting off in small boats.

Convincing himself of this, he turned from the rail to find Morgan deep in converse with

Jim Rimple, and stepping quickly up to them, not liking the look he saw in the sailor's eyes, he heard the pirate captain say something about "Maracaibo," and saw Jim Rimple go off among the men forward. Stillingfleet pulled out a pistol.

"Hark ye, Captain Morgan," he said. "I am not the man to stand for anybody stirring up mutiny on my ship." And with this he presented his piece at the pirate's head, and cocked it.

Morgan laughed in his face, the coarse, reckless, self-confident laugh of a strong man who felt sure of his ground.

"What if I did speak with these men?" he returned. "Will they hold it against me that I offer them a chance for gold?"

Some of the men nearest them, seeing what was going on, stopped their work, now almost done, for the lead was all on deck, and slouched up. Captain Morgan caught Jim Rimple's eye and smiled at him.

Jim Rimple grinned back, pulling at his forelock and shifting uneasily on his feet. He had chipped off from some of the pigs of lead

a handful of ragged pieces of metal, and these he jingled nervously in his palms, so that they clinked and rattled musically.

"Aye, lads," said Morgan, mockingly, "suppose those were pieces-of-eight—money, lads, instead of sinkers for Jim Rimple's fishing lines. Would you hold that, too, against Henry Morgan?"

"Have done with this talk, sir," said Captain Stillingfleet sternly, and went forward to superintend the removal of the last boat-loads of the lead, Morgan's pirates having come back for the remainder of it.

He was anxious to get the work over with and clear his ship of these buccaneers. Leaning over the side he saw that the pirates had returned, this time heavily armed, and some of them had muskets concealed in their boats. When the last of the lead had been stowed away, instead of shoving off as they had done before, they swarmed back over the side of the vessel and trooped down to the rail of the quarterdeck.

"Ho for Maracaibo!" shouted Jim Rimple, carried away with enthusiasm, and throwing

his bits of metal into the air in his excitement.

"Ho for Maracaibo!" shouted the others in a roaring chorus.

Emotional fellows, simple as children for all their rogueries, they were swept for the moment off their feet by the glitter of gold in Morgan's glowing words. They looked questioningly at Nancy, who came now from her cabin, followed by Yellow Eyes, who appeared mysteriously from some hiding-place, and the shouts died down as quickly as they had risen. There was a moment of silence, a thick, heavy, ominous silence, the kind of a silence that fills the world the moment before a hurricane strikes, and then the sharp clatter of Jim Rimple's fishing sinkers as they fell back upon the deck.

One of them rolled to where the dumb man stood blinking in the sunlight, his yellow eyes burning like polished gold. His fiery orbs rested for an instant upon the tiny disk that had fallen at his feet. He stooped and picked it up, smelled of it, bit it, threw it up and caught it, and then went leaping about the deck

like a madman, as if suddenly bereft of his senses.

With the bit of metal clutched in his fingers he rushed among the men, forcing them to look upon it, pointing to it, making the most horrible grimaces in his hopeless efforts to speak. Catching sight of a long-boat loaded with the lead and made fast at the side, he threw himself into her and groveled among the pigs, covering them with his slobbery kisses, caressing them, endeavoring to carry one in his arms. This being too much for even his great strength, he scrambled back over the bulwarks and ran about again among the men, grunting and groaning.

"Curse the fellow!" cried Captain Morgan, backing away from him, and all but stumbling overboard in his haste. "He must be possessed of the devil. I would not have him on my ship for all the gold in Peru. Speak, fool, and have done with thy gibberish. What art thou trying to say? The sight of so much lead hath befuddled thee. When I cast it, I shall have a care to make a bullet that will fit thy skull."

Yellow Eyes, who had stopped his frenzy to listen to this speech, went fairly beside himself, his tongueless gullet filled with froth, his great arms moving convulsively. Little Cochinito, crossing himself piously, as if he had been a real monk, scurried for the side, shouting at the top of his voice:

"He's a witch! He's a witch!" and dived into the sea.

The pirates waited for no more. With blanched faces they made a rush for their boats and tumbled into them, shaking and trembling.

"Come back, you fools!" roared Captain Morgan. "How can a man be a witch?"

But they paid no heed, and took themselves off to a safe distance.

Stopping for a moment the dumb man paused as if thinking, then made a rush for the companionway.

"Don't let him go below, men!" cried Captain Stillingfleet impulsively. "He'll turn the prisoners loose or else disclose the treasure to these pirates. Shoot him down!"

With the snarl of a wild animal, Yellow Eyes

drew a knife from his shirt and rushed upon the Devon man, who caught his wrist in an iron grip, twisting it until the blade fell to the deck. But if Godfrey was strong, the dumb man in his frenzy was his master, and breaking the hold, he sprang back, and, picking up an ax that lay in the scuppers, he hurled it with all his strength. Captain Stillingfleet dodged, but not quickly enough. The ax struck him a glancing blow in the head and he went down like an ox.

With a scream of mingled rage and grief, Nancy looked about her for a weapon, tears of fury in her eyes.

"Give me thy pistol," she demanded of Captain Morgan, who stood apart, a curious light in his eyes.

"Nay," he replied. "Wait a bit. What was it Master Stillingfleet said just now of prisoners—and treasure? There is more mystery here than I had thought on, and the man yonder, for all his dumbness, may give me the clew."

He raised his hand, that the men in the small boats, still at some distance from the ship,

might see him, and gave a long, whistling call.

"Would you spare the scoundrel who blew up your ship, and see him kill the finest Devon man since Francis Drake?" shouted the girl, fairly beside herself.

"Blew up the *Oxford*!" cried Captain Morgan.

"Aye, that he did, I will swear. Canst thou not see it in his evil eyes? The man was born a devil and does not deserve to live—nor shall I spare him now. He hath come at last to his reckoning with me, for the injuries he hath done me since he trepanned me out of France; for the murder that he did upon the old *Baptiste*; for the betrayal of us all at Tortuga; aye, and for killing the man I—I—love," she finished, turning an agonized face to where young Stillingfleet lay upon the deck. "Here is an account I shall pay home myself, an' no one else will aid me."

With this the dumb man, in his molten eyes a thousand demons gleaming, suddenly thrust his hand within his shirt, and when it came forth again there was a pistol in it. He raised it to the level of her forehead, and ran his

burnished eye along the barrel, just as Barney McGiggen and Three-legs came racing down the deck together.

The lad threw himself in front of the girl as the tongueless one fired. Then he pitched headlong to the deck without a moan, while Nancy, at his back, clasped her breast with both hands and sank beside him, for the same bullet had pierced them both.

There was the flash of a tawny body, and with a deep-chested roar the three-legged dog for the second time in its short life hurled himself straight at the throat of Yellow Eyes, and his teeth met in the man's corded neck. Had he been a full-grown dog, he would have killed him, but even so the force of his weight and the snap of those jaws bore the dumb man backward, and he went down with a crash, just as Captain Stillingfleet rolled over in the scuppers and pulled himself to his feet. He took the situation in at a glance, and, observing Captain Morgan leaning over the rail, cursing his men and ordering them to come back, and catching him unawares, suddenly lifted him bodily in his arms and hurled him overboard.

"Heave ahead, men in the tops, men upon the yards!" he commanded. "Get the sails to the yards, men, and step lively. Who is at the wheel there?"

As Pierre took the helm and put it over, he cut the anchor cables with his own hand, and the *Snapdragon* swung around and drifted down the cove on the tide. Fired by his zeal, and catching the meaning of his hurried orders, the men flew to obey. Then Captain Stillingfleet gathered Nancy into his arms. Standing over Yellow Eyes for a moment he said:

"Now, lads, take the dog off that human devil. We will attend to him later."

And then he bore the girl into the shade of the round-house where he laid her down again upon the deck, her head in Cherie's lap.

Bras-de-Mort and Jim Rimple, manning the gun on the poop, trained it upon the pirates and warned them that if they fired with their muskets or tried to come aboard they would sink them. Loaded down as they were with the pigs of lead, they dared not adventure, but picked up Captain Morgan and pulled off for

their own ships, which presently they boarded and got under way.

But by that time the *Snapdragon*, under all the canvas she could carry, was clear of the island, so that the buccaneers, seeing the hopelessness of the chase, soon gave it over and went about. And they saw them no more.

"Will she live?" asked Captain Stillingfleet, on his knees by Nancy.

Cherie nodded.

"Thank God! But better dead than that she had fallen a prize to Henry Morgan. And how is the lad?" he added, as Bras-de-Mort and Jim Rible came up. "I need not ask. And he loved her, too."

His eyes filled with tears. He left the little group gathered about Nancy and stood by the rail. The wind was fresh outside, with the Caribbean rolling and tumbling beneath it.

"How's her head, Mr. Helmsman?" he asked presently.

"South, southeast, sir," replied Pierre, in a voice thick with emotion.

"Keep her full!"

"Aye, aye, sir."

CHAPTER XV

YVONNE

When Nancy opened her eyes, she was lying on the deck in the shadow of the round-house, her head in Cherie's lap, and the sun was going down in the west and sprinkling with flecks of gold the rippling wake the *Snapdragon* left in the blue waters of the Caribbean. She smiled faintly into the tear-dimmed eyes of the Frenchwoman, then closed her own again.

When next her lids fluttered open, Captain Stillingfleet was bending over her.

"Where is Barney?" she asked, so softly they barely heard her. These were the first words she had spoken since she had lost consciousness.

Captain Stillingfleet's eyes filled and a lump rose in his throat, so that he could not answer her, but pointed silently to a small object lying stiffly on the quarter-deck, covered by a sail.

Nancy raised herself with an effort, then sank back, moaning.

"Dead?" she whispered brokenly.

He nodded yes.

"Dead! Oh, dear God, for me! For me! He died for me! Oh! Barney boy, come back to me, come back to me, lad, for I am all alone and need you so." A convulsive sob choked her.

"Hush, dear heart," whispered Cherie. "You, also, are badly hurt. Do not give way to your grief, for 'twill be your death."

"He died for me," moaned Nancy, "he died for me, just as he said he would. 'Mademoiselle,' he said to me, there on the island, Cherie, you remember, 'Mademoiselle, I would lay down my life for you.' And now he has kept his word. Oh, Barney, Barney boy, come back, come back to me." Her cry died away in a wail, and she was silent, her bosom heaving. Then, faintly:

"We are under way?"

"Yes. We got off just in time," answered Captain Stillingfleet.

"Just in time?"

"Yes; hush, you must not exert yourself."

"Just in time? Ah, I remember—Captain Morgan. His men, I thought, were over-armed when they came aboard the last time. I feared he meant us a mischief."

"I was sure of it. But we got clean away, what with leaving behind the bow anchors; and though he gave us chase, we showed him a clean pair of heels, so that he soon gave it over and put back."

"And you, I suppose," said the girl, after a pause, "have taken command of the ship?"

"'Twas a duty, madame," he answered, "I could no longer neglect."

She said nothing to this for a long time, lying quietly, with eyes closed, scarcely breathing, it seemed to Captain Stillingfleet, who watched her anxiously. Then—

"Whither, sir, if I may ask?"

"I have laid out no course as yet," he answered, avoiding her eyes. "There has not been time. We have but sailed before this fret of wind to give the pirates the slip."

"And then?"

"Do not trouble yourself about that, dear

child. Lie quietly, and let us bind up your hurts."

"We are to go adventuring, sir, I and my men, to seek gold wherewith to buy their pardons. I must keep my troth with them."

She stopped, exhausted, and lay still. Then, in a faint voice:

"Yellow Eyes! It all comes back to me now. Where is the dumb man?" she finished with a tremor that shook her whole slender frame. "Where is the tongueless man who killed my Barney?"

"Hush, Nancy, hush, I beg you," said Captain Stillingfleet. "The man with the yellow eyes will trouble you never again. I turned him off at the foreyard arm."

She looked at him dully at first, not comprehending. And then with a shiver, for all her fever, she twisted herself around and looked upward to where he pointed.

Silhouetted against the tropic sky the sinister body of the dumb man dangled from a spar, swinging gently with the motion of the ship.

She turned back with a shudder, and weakly

raised her hand to shade her eyes. Presently she asked:

"You will keep your faith with me, and with the men, Captain Stillingfleet? Your word upon it?"

"For your sake, I shall do as the men bid me," he answered.

"Upon your word?"

"On my soul."

"We must have gold," she cried, her voice rising to a wail, her eyes hot with madness. "We must have gold! Gold, Captain Stillingfleet, to buy the pardons for all of us. Steer me to an island of gold, do you hear? Get out the charts and find me such a one."

"Hush, Nancy, you break my heart. I cannot bear to see thee thus in thy extremity. You must rest quietly, for I perceive the fever is coming upon you."

"Nay, Captain Stillingfleet," she screamed, "I did not think that ye would play me false. You steer for London town!"

"I thought you had great business there," he answered, "and sickose, I have, and pressing business, too. All would be well if we—"



"Would you see my brave fellows lashed through the streets from Newgate at the tail of a cart, or hanged on Tyburn Hill?"

"Nay, Nancy, I—"

"Jim Rimple!" she screamed, as the delirium, she had been fighting off, at length overwhelmed her. "Jim Rimple! Pierre! Where art thou and thy twinkling eyes? Ho, lads, tumble up. How's your helm, Mr. Quartermaster? Put it hard to port. Go below, Captain Stillingfleet. No, dear God, that I would not shoot thee, save that I had no other course—then would I pistol you with my own hand. Forgive me, sir, but go below. What is this that burns my eyes? Take away the light. Whence comes that cruel glare upon the stern?"

"Hush, Nancy dear," he said brokenly, "'tis evening, and the sun is going down."

"How comes it on the stern? So, Captain Stillingfleet, our bow is pointed east, and thou hast played me for a dupe. Mr. Quartermaster, port your helm and sail beyond the sunset, for I can see it plainly, now, and it is solid gold. Father! Do not look at me so

sadly, I beseech thee. Thou dost not know of all the things that I could tell thee on had I the mind."

She stopped. Her shrill voice that had brought the men up upon their tiptoes, with tears in their eyes, sank to a whisper. She lay still, and Godfrey gathered her limp form in his arms and carried her into the cabin, just as Yvonne, the Spanish girl, stepped out upon the deck.

Stillingfleet laid Nancy upon the captain's bed, and left her there with Cherie, and, when he returned with stores from the medicine chests, she was between the sheets and could no longer recognize either of them.

With such rude surgery as he was master of, he bound up her wound, which was in the side. The pistol ball he could not find, and, although he would not have dared to probe for it, if it had proved otherwise the case, he felt sure that it had passed through her body. Inside her shirt he found a packet of papers, and these he put into his pocket, to save for her, while Cherie washed the blood away, and staunches the flow with herbs and bandages.

All that night the Frenchwoman sat wide-eyed by the couch, bathing the sick girl's forehead, and moistening her burning lips with water and brandy.

The moon was master of the tropic sky, and all his court of stars were radiant, when Captain Stillingfleet had got his ship in order.

Then he called the men before the mast, and said a prayer for Barney, before the small body, with round-shot at its feet, slipped over the side. He watched the ripples as they died away, and tears, which he did not try to conceal, welled up into his eyes.

"Farewell, my lad," he whispered, "I will stand guard on her where you left off."

Then he went to the quarterdeck, trying to solve the many problems which now confronted him, nor had he found his answers when day came again.

From time to time through the night he stole into the cabin and stood by Nancy's bed, but gained little consolation there, for she was out of her head with fever and pain, and so white it clutched his throat to look at her.

Coming out of the cabin after the last of these visits, when the sun was high in the heavens, he found the Spanish girl walking up and down, very fresh and gay in a yellow gown of silk, and with a scarf about her head. Although he scarcely heeded her, so busy was he with thoughts of other things, many times that day he found her in his company, and once she joined him on the quarterdeck.

The days that followed were idle ones, for calm followed calm with such persistency that they could scarce make a league a day, and the men, what with having nothing to do, were growing restive at the weather that balked their desires.

There was idleness upon the quarterdeck, too, and when the reports from Nancy's sick-bed became more encouraging, and Cherie's face was bright once more with hope, Captain Stillingfleet began to take more interest in Yvonne, who always had for him a smiling mouth and dancing eyes, and such an inexhaustible supply of gowns and finery that never did he see her twice the same.

Standing with her at the rail one day her hand touched his, and as she leaned towards him, smiling into his eyes, he could feel her hair blowing upon his cheek, and the warm breath from her perfumed lips. The ardent look she gave him changed to one of vexation when a sailor, his forelock in his hand, came up and begged the privilege of interrupting them.

"What now, Jim Rible?" demanded Captain Stillingfleet.

"Begging your pardon, sir," stammered the buccaneer, "but the men has appointed me to ask if you will step forward a bit, sir."

"What do they want?"

"A favor, sir, to ask you, and a little discussion of what we are to do next, seeing that in this ca'm there's plenty of time to think things over."

"Well, then, another time will do," said Captain Stillingfleet.

"Asking your pardon, sir, but the men is anxious to see you now. What they want won't keep."

A refusal of this request was on his tongue,

but thinking the better of it, he nodded an assent.

"I must quit you for a moment," he said, turning to the girl, who made no great effort to hide her chagrin. And with a bow he left her and walked to the rail of the quarterdeck, where the men had gathered in a body, gloom and frowns upon their faces.

"What is it, men?" he asked.

There was a shuffling of feet. They looked then at each other in considerable perplexity, but no one spoke.

"Art thou tongue-tied?"

"Well," said Trueheart Jackson, stepping forward, "we want to know how we stand, sir."

"Stand!" repeated Captain Stillingfleet. "What mean ye by that?"

"Are we going adventuring, or what? That's what we want to know."

"Aye," boomed Jim Rible, "that's what we want to know."

"Do you blame me because there is no wind?"

"The weather's about to change, sir," said

Trueheart Jackson again, "and there'll be a breeze afore morning. Now, the question is, where are we going then?"

"I am the captain here," said Stillingfleet impatiently. "You can leave that to me."

"Aye, we could, and would, if you were on the quarterdeck of a man-o'-war, but you're on a craft that's ours, that we took, eh, mates?"

"Right you are, Trueheart Jackson," boomed Jim Rible, "and we will back you up in that."

"Hark ye, men," said Godfrey bluntly, "I'll have no mutiny on this ship so long as I am captain here. Mind that!"

"There ain't going to be no mutiny—yet," said Jackson, while the men shuffled their feet uneasily. "But agreements is agreements, and we want ours kept."

"What agreement?" demanded Captain Stillingfleet, studying the weather-stained faces before him, but without letting the men see what was passing in his own mind.

"What we wants to know is, where do we maroon these Dons?"

"Aye," chimed in Jim Rible, slapping

Pierre upon the back so hard that the Frenchman's little eyes threatened to twinkle themselves right out of his face, "where do we set 'em ashore, that's what we wants to know—now."

"If you haven't made up your mind," said Jackson, taking a step closer to the rail, "we thought we'd tell you that the coast of Domingo suits us well enough. The main thing is to get rid of these Dons. It ain't right to keep 'em down below like this, and it ain't healthy for us, neither. And what's more, we don't want 'em breaking out and getting us all bloody again. So it'll be Domingo, to-morrow, unless you know another place."

"That's talking, Trueheart Jackson," said Jim Rimple. "You speak wisdom, and we are with you, eh, mates?"

There was a chorus of assent.

"There is no danger of the Spaniards taking the ship," said Captain Stillingfleet, "so I tell you to let your minds rest on that score. They have not the strength."

"Aye, they have not the strength, but what they cannot do by force they may do by

strategy, and that would be the same for us."

"A petticoat might easy unfasten them hatches, I'm thinking," said Jim Rimple, after a pause, "and that's what I'm worrit about—me and my mates."

Captain Stillingfleet's face darkened, for Jim Rimple's sally had been greeted by a roar of laughter, and the men jerked and nodded their heads aft, where Yvonne still stood by the rail, waiting.

"I am a Frenchman," said Bras-de-Mort, stepping into the center of the group. "I know women. This Spanish girl will have you wound around her finger in another week, and we'll wake up some morning in irons."

"Do you think that I would betray my own countrymen?" cried Captain Stillingfleet, his face suddenly full of blood.

"There ain't no telling what a man wouldn't betray for a pretty gal," said Jim Rimple, in a tone of deep conviction—"even another gal. I had a man once that I'd bunked with for nigh onto sixteen year try to stick a knife in my ribs, and all on account of a wench that liked me better than she did him."

"We're fair uneasy, sir," admitted Trueheart Jackson, "and no offense to you, but this we want settled. Are you with us?"

"You're talking nonsense, men," said Captain Stillingfleet. "But here comes a capful of wind. Get to your stations, and I will speak more at large with you on this at another time. Mr. Quartermaster, mind your helm," and with this he turned on his heel, and left them.

The Spanish captain, who had the freedom of the deck, was waiting for him in the cabin that had been set aside for him and his daughter, and, inviting him in, closed the door, and said to him very frankly:

"Captain Stillingfleet, the time has come for simple phrases between us. I see that your heart is not in this enterprise that has resulted in my ship being temporarily taken from me. Let us have done with indecision, and talk as men who understand each other."

Captain Stillingfleet looked at him, but said nothing.

"I know," said Don Luis, "who you are, and how you stand at court. We serve his Majesty together, and have here an opportunity to show

our loyalty. Say the word and let my men on deck, to-night, when these pirate scum have gone to sleep in their liquor, and we can take the ship and sail for England."

The door had opened as he was speaking, and turning, Godfrey found the Spanish girl at his side, such a smile upon her face as was like to turn his head.

"I heard what my father proposed just now," she said, springing lightly to the table in front of him, and sitting there, regarding him with dark eyes full of invitation, her right knee drawn up and held in her clasped hands, her red lips close to his. "Shall I ask you, too?"

"I know that your business in England is urgent," said Don Luis, after a pause, "for you have mentioned it to me. And the king has confidence in you."

"What a wonderful voyage home it would be, Captain Stillingfleet!" smiled Yvonne, flashing at him another look whose meaning he was not slow to read.

"It is true," said Captain Stillingfleet, "that I must go to England. While I remain here,

his Majesty's very life may be in danger for want of news that I could take to him."

"There is no other way, save the one I have mentioned," said Don Luis, a smile of satisfaction lighting up his dark face.

"There must be another way. I cannot take that one."

"Not even for your king?"

"Nor even for me?" asked Yvonne, placing her hand upon his arm.

"I cannot. I have passed my word."

The girl's face darkened, and her lip curled.

"The men have trusted me."

"The men!" she was smiling again.

"Poof! They are pirates, the riff-raff of society!" exclaimed Don Luis.

"To me they are Englishmen," replied Captain Stillingfleet, simply. "I must find another way."

There was a knock at the door, and opening it, Captain Stillingfleet looked at Cherie with sudden alarm springing to his heart.

"She is worse?" he asked.

"Better," answered the Frenchwoman. "I

thought you would want to know that she has passed the crisis of her fever."

"Thank God!" said Godfrey quietly, stepped out of the cabin, and went to her, leaving Don Luis staring into his daughter's face with a look that would have pleased Jim Rimple hugely.

Nancy was sleeping quietly, and he stood there for a long time smiling down at her. Presently he looked for his handkerchief, and found in his pocket in its place a sheaf of papers, which he took out and stared at curiously. They were the packet he had taken from her bosom, and when he recalled the incident, until now forgotten, he would have put them back; but they unrolled in his hand, and his eye fell upon some writing on the parchment that made him whistle with astonishment.

He stepped on deck quickly, and sang out an order that brought the ship about. Then he went down to the rail of the quarterdeck again, and sent for the men, who came tumbling up, their faces now wreathed in smiles at the changing of the course, the significance of which was not lost upon them.

"Well, men," he said, when they had all come up, "and after Domingo what?"

"Well, as for that, sir, what say you?" grinned Trueheart Jackson, while Jim Rimple capered with delight.

"I say Merry England, lads," replied Captain Stillingfleet.

There was a sullen growl at this.

"Nay, men, hear me through. I have something for you here better than riches."

CHAPTER XVI

JIM RIMBLE'S KEEPSAKE

"How comes it, Captain Stillingfleet," Nancy asked him one day, when they were well past the Azores, and she sat on deck, wrapped in a shawl, with Three-legs at her feet, "that I see aboard no signs of the Spanish prisoners? I had not thought on them before. Where are they—Don Luis and his—daughter?"

"Put ashore, as was the original agreement," answered Captain Stillingfleet so indifferently that she studied his face with something more like peace in her soul than she had known for weeks.

"On some island?"

"On the main of Hispaniola. After Yellow Eyes—after the dumb man had gone, we put in and set them ashore, and left them with water and victuals sufficient for their needs."

"So," she thought, her being bathed in a

great contentment, "he does not love her, after all."

Then, after musing a while, she added, aloud:

"I thank you, Captain Stillingfleet, for following my wishes when you took command."

He looked a little sheepish at this, and then, with a wry smile, said:

"By St. Bride! I had no choice in the matter."

"No choice? I do not understand."

"The men. I would have had a mutiny on my hands."

"Oh!"

"They said the agreement had been reached to maroon the Spaniards, Don Luis and all, and that did I not choose to do it, they would seize the ship, which assuredly they would have done, as they did threaten."

"So," thought Nancy, "it was not from indifference, then, that he left this Spanish girl," and fell into serious mood once more, until Jim Rible came rolling up and held out a bit of a trinket on a string with a gesture of such honest devotion that her heart was touched.

"A keepsake from old Jim, miss—captain, I mean, asking your pardon," he stammered huskily. "One of them there sinkers o' mine that set off Yellow Eyes in such a fit and started all the trouble. I hammered it out round like, and put my mark on it, ma'am, a cross-bones and skull, and run a string through it. I thought on how you might wear it, miss—captain, I mean, as was, for Jim Rimple's sake, to remember him by, miss—captain, I mean."

"Why, that I truly will, Jim Rimple," laughed Nancy, grasping his hand. "I shall wear it for you, and in memory of the profession I entered but did not practise. But for the high-handed proceeding of Captain Stillingfleet in running off with our ship, I should have been a pirate like—"

She stopped suddenly, and fell to musing.

Presently she asked:

"Master Stillingfleet, how comes it these fellows return so willingly with you to England?"

Captain Stillingfleet chuckled.

"Why, madame," said he, "you yourself provided a scheme whereby they could all go back,

and I told them of it; and hugely pleased they were, indeed."

"I provided a scheme? I know of none."

"Aye."

He pulled from his coat a packet of papers, and in a flash she recognized them.

"Why," said she, starting up excitedly, "I have seen those before."

"As I have surmised."

"I found them in the bosom of your shirt," he said, while Nancy hung her head, "when you were wounded, and kept them for you. And I concluded that you had brought them off with you from the *Oxford*, when she was blown up."

"And so I did, to be sure. Captain Collier passed them to me a moment or two before the explosion which killed him took place. I remembered no more until I found myself in the sea."

"You must have thrust them within your shirt to save them, and so come off with them safely."

"'Tis possible."

"'Tis likely."

"'Tis lucky, too. Those papers contain pardons for such as Captain Collier might wish to favor, for so he told me."

"Aye, that is true," said Captain Stillingfleet. "Pardons in blank; leastways they were in blank."

"Were?"

"See, I have filled them out in the names of those among us who need them."

"And generous of you, I call it, too, to think of them and try to aid them," she said. "Sometimes, Master Stillingfleet, I have thought you did not have a heart. And it was clever of you to think of it, too."

"Necessity sharpened my wits."

"How so?"

"The men fell to grumbling before the mast. They feared we did not have enough treasure to buy pardons for all, and were hot for seeking more. In desperation, I thought of this scheme, and so wrote their names down upon the pardons. This satisfied them, and so they go back to England willingly enough."

"Can they return in safety?"

"Aye, under the king's name they can walk

the streets of London free men, and none may touch them."

"And with gold in their pockets?"

"That is as may be," he answered.

But this did not disturb her, for, thought she, if there was to be war with Spain again below the tropic, she and her men could profit from it as well as any. Presently she added:

"Let me take the papers, Captain Stillingfleet. I would examine them, for they have set my mind at rest upon a subject that hath been causing me great perplexity."

They were walking now into the round-house, where Nancy, seizing a quill, while Captain Stillingfleet stepped out for a moment to issue some order, contrived to scribble something upon them which he, upon taking the packet from her and returning it to his pocket, failed to observe.

What to do with the black man, the one who had assisted the Fleming in their escape from d'Ogeron at Tortuga, also gave her great concern, for that she had promised to transport him back to Guinea she by no means forgot; but the negro, a very intelligent and honest fellow,

set her mind at rest upon this score. Coming up to her one day, when they had passed the fishing fleets in the Channel, and were in sight of the white cliffs of Dover, he besought her, with so many manifestations of devotion that she was touched, to take him into her service and let him abide with her in England, that she consented.

"But how comes it, Kololo," for so he called himself, "that you would rather go into England with me than return to your own country?" she asked.

"Me no find my country any more," he answered. "My country move all about," from which she understood that the tribe to which he belonged had no fixed abode, but was nomadic.

"But haven't you a wife in your country, Kololo?" she insisted.

"Me have wife long time—no have wife now," he returned, rolling the whites of his eyes at her so ludicrously that she could not forbear to smile. "Some mans have Kololo's wife now. Kololo get plenty more wives, one, two, three, maybe. Kololo rich now."

By this he referred to the fact that he had been awarded his share of the spoils, as one of the men before the mast, and, indeed, he had proved himself a natural sailor and very nimble in going aloft, even in the roughest weather. Nancy tried to explain to him that people in England had but one wife, but he either would not, or could not, understand this. So she gave it over and consented to take him into her service, at which he seemed hugely delighted.

They arrived at length in the Thames on an April afternoon, and came to anchor at London.

Then such a stir was created as had not been known in England since good Queen Bess had gone aboard the *Golden Hind* to brave the wrath of Spain and make of Francis Drake a knight, for word of the treasure stowed away in the hold of the *Snapdragon* spread through all the ale-houses and taverns where the men rushed so soon as they could contrive to leave the ship, until the story of the Devon girl who had rescued thirty Englishmen from the French in the Indies was the talk of the town,

and John Evelyn himself went down, with some of the gentlemen of the Admiralty, to see the British ship they had retaken from the Spaniards, and verify the tales of gold that had reached even the king, and greatly astonished were they to find in command Godfrey Stillingfleet, who had long been given over for dead.

Nothing would do but Mr. Evelyn must fetch them straight away to Whitehall, although Nancy would rather far have gone to her cousin Mountford's house, as well to learn news of her father and her old friend Colonel Sidney, as to deliver their message to her kinsman, the importance of which, she feared, had been destroyed by her long absence in the tropics, making the news she bore stale. But they would not hear of this, and so carried her off with them in a coach, waiting only to put the *Snapdragon* under the protection of the customs officers.

Charles Stuart was not the man to be unmoved by so stirring a tale of adventure, and as Captain Stillingfleet described how Nancy had come to him and the English pirates in the

night, in the French governor's castle on the cliffs of Tortuga, and had called to them in the darkness a message of freedom, the sparkle in his eyes grew more bright and his face beamed.

"'Tis a pity, Mr. Evelyn," said he, "that we have not such tarpaulins in the fleet as these men who have been fighting our battles below the tropic, else would we have had greater success lately against the Dutch and the Turk. Yet, methinks your favorite theory as to the value of discipline receives a rude blow from this account."

"Nay, sire," replied Mr. Evelyn, whose keen interest in the welfare of his Majesty's navy had made him an authority on all such matters at court, "but does not the fact that it was Master Stillingfleet who took command at a critical juncture, and so brought them off safely with all their booty from that fellow Morgan—who must be a very devil of a captain, an' I misjudge him not, and will be heard from one day to the credit and glory of our arms—does not the fact that Captain Stilling-

fleet, as a gentleman of the fleet, had been trained to command, but prove the soundness of my contention?"

"It doth seem to me that Captain Stillingfleet did but conduct himself indifferently well, since he assumed command of the—what is the name, it doth please me hugely, ah—the *Snapdragon*, only when the maid had been put out of the combat, as it were," returned the king dryly.

Nancy, accompanied by Godfrey Stillingfleet and the gentlemen of the Admiralty, had arrived at Whitehall to find there the usual gay and dissolute assemblage. In the gallery a great crowd of lords and ladies were at cards or dice, and Nancy had grown suddenly timid as she beheld so many of the women whom she had been taught to regard as creatures of vice and shame, regarding her with ill-concealed astonishment written on their painted cheeks and lifted eyebrows as she was hurried through one of the long corridors towards the king's private apartment.

Charles, toying with a spaniel, was seated at a table looking at a collection of medallions

which a goldsmith had spread out before him for his inspection, and his Majesty's interest had been divided at first between the trinkets and the story which Captain Stillingfleet, at the request of Mr. Evelyn, had begun to tell.

But as he progressed, the king's attention was more and more attracted to the slender girl who stood shrinkingly in the shadow of a magnificent cabinet, until now he regarded her with such frank admiration that Nancy, feeling upon her those dark eyes which were never so agreeably occupied as in the inspection of a beautiful woman, suddenly felt herself grow shy and her cheeks to burn.

"And how much treasure have you brought off with you?" he demanded suddenly, when he had surveyed her critically at his leisure from beneath his heavy eyelids.

"We estimate it at 300,000 crowns, my liege," replied Nancy, "but I do not know what the sum will prove to be exactly, until it hath been appraised."

"A goodly fortune," commented his Majesty.

"And would have been larger, but for the lead which we did practically give away to

"What!" cried Charles, leaning back in his chair, a look of astonishment upon his handsome face. "Do you then decline the lady's hand? By God's light! The incident is unique. Never before has it happened—nor would I have believed it could!"

"Sire, 'tis through no fault of my own—the lady is promised to another."

"Thou art a simpleton, sir. I should make thee Duke of Numskull! Will you tell me to my face that Charles Stuart knows naught of women? This lass hath felt thy lips and is afire to feel them again. And now, be off with you, and, when you go upon your honeymoon, you might easily combine business with pleasure by spending it in Paris, where I have other business of the kind that took you there before that awaits your attention."

"Nay, my liege," burst forth Nancy, "but there is no need now for that."

The king regarded her with amazement, looking in great perplexity from her to Captain Stillingfleet, and then back to her again. At last he said:

"What know you of this affair?"

She hung her head and was silent.

"This boy hath been babbling, I'll be bound. What say you now, Mr. Evelyn, of the value of discipline?"

"'Twas nothing much that he said, sire," said Nancy softly. "'Twas only a careless word dropped, and would have meant nothing to another. But, my liege, I am John Chillingworth's daughter."

The king in his excitement sprang to his feet and stood looking down at her.

"Daughter of John Chillingworth!" he exclaimed. "Daughter to that arch-traitor!"

He fell into a reverie, then threw back his head and laughed that singularly winning Stuart laugh.

"Odsfish! Solomon was right! Why, here I have gone and conferred upon John Chillingworth's daughter's husband that is to be, the estates which he hath forfeited for his treason."

"But, sire," said Godfrey Stillingfleet, blushing furiously and clasping and unclasping his hands nervously, "I fear your Majesty did not understand that I cannot accept this gracious

gift for reasons—for reasons that make it impossible—the lady, sire, is promised to—”

“As for you, sir!” interrupted the king, as if he had not heard him. “Upon my soul, for a secret mission I would rather trust this cunning maid here than any young blood in Christendom.”

Nancy smiled, for the words carried her straight back to the little lodging over the pastry-cook’s shop in Lille, and those that General Sidney had spoken to her father.

“Well, sir,” the king was saying, “since I have made over Chillingworth’s estates to his daughter, through you, we will have done with this traitor quest, so leave him be in peace, until such time as he shall come to England with his plots and cursed conspiracies.”

“Nay, my liege,” returned Nancy, making him a courtesy, “but he can return to England as safely as any man, and Algernon Sidney, too, since they have the protection of the king’s pardon.”

“Pardon!” cried his Majesty. “I know naught of a pardon for either of these regicides.”

"Aye," said Nancy, smiling frankly and unabashed into his eyes, so that he was as struck with the freshness and innocence of her youth as with her girlish beauty, "aye, for both of them, sire."

With this she suddenly drew from Godfrey's pocket the packet of papers she had first taken from the hand of Captain Collier on the *Oxford*, and extending them toward the king, cried:

"See, your Majesty—the royal seal!"

"What means this?" demanded the king, turning the papers over in his hand and addressing himself to Captain Stillingfleet.

"These, sire, be the pardons which were furnished to Captain Collier for such of those English derelicts in the Indies who, needing them, might gain them for some exploit in the service of your Majesty's government. When Captain Collier was killed in the explosion, as I described to you, the papers came into our possession, and having among us many worthy fellows, your devoted subjects, who could not otherwise come back to Old England, to the glory and credit of your kingdom, I made bold,

sire, knowing full well the purposes for which they had been issued, to use them as you yourself had intended."

"Of that I have no complaint to make," replied Charles. "But since the rebels Chillingworth and Sidney were not among you, how their names appear here above my seal, I cannot make out."

"Yet 'tis very simple, my liege," said Nancy.

"Simple!" fretted the king.

"Aye, my liege—I wrote them there myself." Saying which, she assisted the king in unfolding the papers, and pointing to the list of names upon the pardon indicated those of Sidney and Chillingworth among the rest.

"Am I ever to be thwarted?" cried the king. Then the smile came back again to his dark face. "Nathless, and I have put my name upon it, there it shall stand," he said. "So worry not, my child, and send for thy father and his friend when thou wilt, and so they comport themselves as my faithful and devoted subjects in the future they will hear naught of me again."

He turned to go, the interview at an end,

when his eye caught a glimpse of Jim Rimple's keepsake hung by its string about the girl's neck, and spreading it upon his palm:

"Odsfish! Mr. Isaacs," said he, "here is a medallion more curious than any in your collection. See, the cross-bones and skull. Some pirate's masterpiece, no doubt."

"Right willingly would I present it to you, my liege," said Nancy, "were it not for the fact that it is a keepsake, given to me by Jim Rimple, the sailor I did tell you of, who hath exacted a promise from me to wear it in his remembrance."

"I recall him—the singing fisherman," laughed the king.

"Aye, that is the one," replied Nancy. "And this was one of his angling sinkers, fashioned rudely into the shape you see it. 'Tis without value, being but a bit of lead—a chip from one of the pigs that Master Stillingfleet did sell to Captain Morgan for cannon balls. Yet would I wear it for him."

"Lead, say you!" exclaimed Mr. Isaacs, the goldsmith, who had taken Jim Rimple's keepsake into his hand and had been examining it.

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"And who else had an ounce of sense in all that tattered crew?" said Charles.

"The dumb man!"

"'Sdeath! He might have made thee rich, and for reward you let him dangle from a spar."

"Nay, your Majesty," said Captain Stillingfleet with spirit, "I turned him off for all the crimes he did commit against this lady here, and had he told me then, when he had shot her down, where I might find a city paved with gold, nathless I would have hanged him still."

"I had not suspected thee of such an interest in the wench," smiled Charles, taking Nancy's hand. "Is there naught else I can do for you, my child?" he asked.

"Well, yes, your Majesty," replied Mistress Chillingworth, feeling for Godfrey's hand, and taking it in her own, "you might give us your blessing."

"But I thought you were promised to another," smiled Charles, a twinkle in his eye.

"Not to another, my liege," answered the girl, "but to this one, as you did guess, and I

did see just now in his eyes a light that makes me bold to speak."

Captain Stillingfleet threw his shoulders back with a gasp, and she felt her fingers crushed in his great palm.

"Bless you both," laughed the king. "You need a guardian, you two, and I will serve as well as any other you could find. My boy, when you bring Lady Stillingfleet back to London, do not forget us at Whitehall."

He turned, and left them looking into each other's eyes.

THE END

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